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The Week

EVENTS of the first importance are shaping themselves behind the scenes in Europe. Germany and Russia are negotiating a mutual arbitration treaty which is likely to have an important effect on the international situation. The German government insists that this treaty is no more than a logical extension of the system introduced by the Locarno treaties (which, it will be remembered, do not come into effect until Germany enters the League). This is also the view taken by Great Britain. Quite another interpretation is made, however, by Poland and Rumania, which see reënforcement for Russia in case she goes to war with either of them. The French newspapers, speaking on behalf of their country, both as protector of the Little Entente and as exponent of the "keep Germany prostrate" theory, have been quick to protest that the new agreement not only does not supplement Locarno, but is hostile to it.

NOT less serious are the developments around the Mediterranean. Turkey, as we go to press, is reported to be mobilizing in fear of a concerted attack by Italy and Greece. She believes that a secret alliance for war has been made between the dictators in these two countries, although this is denied both in Rome and Athens. The incident has undoubtedly been precipitated by Mussolini's visit to Tripoli, which has served to advertise his known determination to get more territory, somewhere and by some means. Turkey believes he is likely to seek fulfilment of his ambition at her expense, Pangalos joining in for the sake of wiping out the memory of Smyrna. To be sure, France and England would have something to say about such a war, either bringing pressure to bear directly or through the League of Nations. However, they are not by any means unanimous in their policy toward Italy at the present time. France is protesting the agreement between England and Italy, partitioning out Abyssinia into two spheres of influence without taking France into consideration. Anxiety about this whole development is undoubtedly one reason for the sudden, not to say frantic, effort of the French to make peace with Abd-el Krim. Another, of course, is the continued weakness of the franc which, despite increased taxation and contributions to a "save the franc" fund, last week reached a new low level for all time.

ITALY is without doubt the chief thorn in France's side at present. Mussolini clearly wants to be the head of a great Latin-Slav bloc, and he is just as clearly getting there, at the expense chiefly of France. He has come to an agreement with Jugoslavia which will be very useful to him, provided the present quarrel between the Serbs and the irrepressible Croat leader, Radich, does not end in a revolution. He has made, or is about to make, an agreement with Rumania supporting the latter's claim to Bessarabia—an agreement so useful to the Rumanians that it is likely to survive the fall of the dynasty if, as is more than possible, that should take place. He may or may not have made the agreement with Pangalos in Greece which the Turks allege. He is known to be firmly allied to the Fascisti in Hungary and Bavaria, two groups both of which are plotting revolutions. This leaves France, despite her much-vaunted European hegemony, with only Czechoslovakia and Poland

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still in the status quo. Is Poland still true? Skrzynski has just been in Vienna for the purpose of negotiating a treaty of mutual arbitration with Austria. Poor little Austria is not worth placating for her own sake, but she is an excellent back door through which to reach Berlin; and if the correspondents are right, it is for just that purpose that Poland means to use her.

WITH international affairs in their present state, the outlook for the preliminary disarmament conference next month is about as gloomy as it could very well be. Russia has refused to participate, since the conference is to meet at Geneva, and Russia has boycotted Switzerland ever since the murder of Vorovsky. It is probably true that her alleged fear lest harm befall her envoys is only a pretext for keeping out of a conference for which from the beginning she has had no enthusiasm. It is also true that the western powers are guilty of sharp practice. If they believe, as they say, that the presence of Russia is vitally important, they could have managed to hold the conference outside the boundaries of Switzerland. The truth is, of course, that they are divided in regard to the matter. France is afraid of what may develop in the final conference and for that reason is glad to see a postponement even of the preliminary meeting; the present British government is apathetic about it; the real enthusiasm, in so far as there is any, lies with the smaller powers and, to a not very startling degree, with the United States.

THOUGH the incidents of the Passaic strike have been more sensational than those of any labor difficulty in this country for many months, and have received greater publicity on account of the proximity of Passaic to New York with its enterprising press, its comparatively skilful reporting, and its active liberal groups, they are characteristic in most respects of the situations often arising in American industrial communities as a result of the autocratic labor policy of employers and the subservience of public officials and courts to the propertied classes. The strikers attempt to keep up their morale by meetings, parades and picketing. The employers attempt to break the strike by calling on public authorities, either through police power or court orders, to suppress these demonstrations. The excuse of the authorities and courts for acting is to preserve public order and prevent violence—either active or constructive—upon any who may wish to desert the strike. In Passaic this excuse has provided a thinner veil than usual for the real purpose of strike-breaking. The reaction of the strikers is to contend for the ordinary civil liberties of free speech and assemblage, and against illegal and oppressive action on the part of authorities such as police violence, unjustified arrests of leaders and high bail. Even if the actions of the authorities are finally disallowed they temporarily harass the strikers by diverting funds and energies to the struggle for civil liberty and justice.

AUTOCRACY in industry cannot be indefinitely maintained without these distressing attempts on the part of employers and their official accomplices to turn a supposedly democratic civil community into a group of rulers and subjects in which the will of the masters is supported by governmental force. This happened in the steel strike of 1919; it happened in the railroad shop strike of 1922; it has happened several times in the coal regions of West Virginia; it has happened before in Passaic, in Paterson, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and in hundreds of other places and industries. Those who value civil liberties must be constantly alert in their defense, every time such a crisis arises. Not until it is proved, in instance after instance, that such methods of strike-breaking are too costly to the employers and officials using them, and strengthen rather than weaken the strikers' morale, will they be discredited. Furthermore, those who dislike situations of this kind should reflect that they arise fundamentally from the refusal to admit organized labor to the councils of industry. Where trade-unions have been well established and employers no longer entertain the intention to suppress them, strikes may occur, but on the whole the balance is held more evenly by officials, employers do not as a rule attempt to assert exclusive sovereignty, and settlement of disputes by conference tends to supplant such demoralizing disruption of the social fabric.

THE second week of the great Senate hearing on prohibition was as unsatisfactory as the first—which is saying a great deal. Any quantity of witnesses were heard, and the record was loaded down with statistics, opinions, guesses, anecdotes, resolutions and letters. It is hard to say whether the witnesses or the members of the Senate committee showed a more complete departure from the scientific attitude of mind. Almost any existing condition, or condition supposed or hoped to exist, good or bad, was triumphantly attributed to the operation of the prohibition law; whereas it ought to be obvious that in a complicated civilization no two factors can be laid down as simple cause and effect. On such a matter as crime, for example, there are no statistics which would make possible a comparative study of a comprehensive character, and even if there were, the relation of prohibition to existing conditions must still remain chiefly a matter of surmise. The Senate hearing allowed a great many people to blow off steam; it showed us what we already knew, that prohibition is not being enforced, and it revealed the dry forces as genuinely frightened. Aside from that it was a waste of time and money, as most such investigations are. We note with interest, by the way, that the National Social Science Research Council has appointed a subcommittee to study social aspects of prohibition, and that Prof. E. G.

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Catlin of Cornell has been granted a leave of absence in order to conduct the survey. We wish him luck; with the exception of the work done by the Federal Council of Churches, he will find hardly any footprints of predecessors which are worthy of respectful attention.

THE argument of Professor Irving Fisher of Yale that prohibition has saved the nation $6,000,000,000 annually is pretty flimsy reasoning for one supposed to be a scientist. It is true, as he says, that the national income was larger in 1925 than in 1919, when prohibition was adopted. It is true that real wages, or the purchasing power of wage-earnings, was larger. But as a specialist in the purchasing power of the dollar, Professor Fisher ought to have mentioned other things that are also true. The national income was much smaller in 1921 and 1922 than in 1920. If his post hoc, ergo propter hoc reasoning were correct, that would show that prohibition at first reduced the national income. Of course the real cause of the lower income was that a deflationary movement reduced prices. And when prices were reduced, wages did not fall as rapidly or as far. That fact accounts for the post-war gain in the purchasing power of wages. This gain was, to be sure, accompanied by increased productivity of industry. But increased industrial productivity is a phenomenon which occurred regularly before prohibition as well as after it and has been going on for a century. It is largely due to better and more machinery and better management. How far is it attributable to increased energy of individual workmen? Neither Professor Fisher nor anyone else knows. Yet only in that way could the supposed gain of prohibition be registered. And what about the marked gain in productivity between 1923 and 1925—which was unaccompanied, by the way, by any visible increase in real wages? Was prohibition better enforced after 1923 than between 1921 and 1923? To assert this would be absurd, and Professor Fisher does not assert it. It is interesting to note that in the same week one of the chiefs of the electrical industry attributed the gain in productivity and wages to the enlarged use and reduced cost of electric power.

ENEMIES of American adherence to the World Court are jubilant. McKinley of Illinois, a pro-Court, pro-administration Senator, has been badly defeated in the primary, and Secretary Kellogg has brusquely declined to have the United States represented in a conference at Geneva under League auspices, called to discuss the American reservations. There is now even talk among the irreconcilables in Washington of repudiating our proposed limited and cautious degree of coöperation with the Court. Their hopes, we believe, are not justified by the facts. Conditions in America are such that it is impossible for an election to turn upon a single issue; there is no valid evidence that a majority of the voters of Illinois are opposed to American participation in the Court. At least three other factors —prohibition, farmer discontent and labor opposition—played their part. Moreover, whatever the voters of Illinois may believe about the Court, they are not necessarily typical of the sentiment of the whole country or even the Middle West. The continued and bitter opposition of the Chicago Tribune to the League of Nations may have helped to create an attitude of unreasoning hostility in Chicago and nearby territory which the press cannot now alter. As for the refusal of the State Department to participate in a conference held at Geneva and utilizing the League's machinery, that was, we think, inevitable; the League of Nations officials were badly advised to draw down upon themselves a rebuff which could have been predicted. Mr. Coolidge supported the World Court on the theory that it has nothing whatever to do with the League; to share in the conference would seem to the country a confession that the Court's enemies were right when they called it the back door to Geneva. Despite all the talk, however, it is our guess that no American action will be taken to weaken further our very feeble gesture of participation in the Court. The real danger lies in the likelihood that some of the other nations will reject the Senate's reservations and resolutions as putting an impossible limitation on the Court's procedure.

DISCONTENT of the mid-western farmers has apparently forced the administration to adopt the principles of the old McNary-Haugen bill, which it has often denounced as unsound. The main feature of this bill, as of the new administration measure, is to subsidize agriculture by appropriating from the public treasury a large sum to finance the dumping abroad of "surplus" crops so that the products sold within the United States may be marketed as far above the world price as the protective tariff permits. It amounts to an attempt by the farmers to be brought within the protective system by being given the dumping privilege which American manufacturers who control their markets now enjoy. So great was the opposition to the subsidy provision of the McNary-Haugen bill that the farmers' representatives abandoned it when this Congress opened, substituting for it an "equalization fee" to be collected from the producers of exportable crops themselves. Close examination, however, revealed that this device would be impracticable. In meat products, for instance, it would be absurd to collect a fee from hog and beef raisers in order to subsidize the great packers who do the actual exporting. In wheat, the subsidy would have to be collected from growers in regions that do not need it in order to keep alive the marginal growers. So the subsidy is revived as a means of placating the agricultural sufferers. We doubt whether any device will enable the farmers to join the special privilege group which the protective tariff creates;

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we believe their salvation lies in more fundamental remedies.

ACCORDING to the experts, 27,000,000 persons are now radio listeners in the United States. This is of course a very rough estimate. It assumes that all the sets sold or built by amateurs are still in use; that there is one set to a family, that each family consists of four and a fraction persons, and that all of them listen. These are all rather loose assumptions. While it is true that the growth of the radio industry is one of the marvels of the age, it is by no means equally true that all the sets put into operation continue to be used. It seems to be a common experience for the family with a radio to use it incessantly the first few months, then with diminishing frequency and at last almost never except when some particularly interesting occasion is being "put on the air." At present, the radio is almost exclusively a musical instrument. While it provides an astonishing amount of serious music by good orchestras and soloists, it offers an even more astonishing quantity of jazz. The vast potentialities in the field of information, news transmission, and non-musical entertainment are still almost untouched. The position held by the station director ought to be one comparable to that of newspaper editor or college president; but it is at present usually regarded as needing only a sort of vaudeville impresario. When it is filled by men of higher calibre, some of the dead radios may come to life again.

The New Bargain with France

IN the near future the relation between France and the United States, as affected by the war debt and by the extension of new loans, will for a few weeks become the most conspicuous subject of public attention. Soon after the Senate ratifies the settlement with Italy, the Debt Commission will announce the details of the proposed settlement with France. Although the exact terms of this settlement are still nominally secret, the essential facts have leaked out. They imitate the Italian precedent. France will bind herself to pay little or nothing in the beginning, but the annuities will increase steadily until at the end of twenty-five years her annual obligation will be fully $60,000,000 and at the end of fifty years not less than $120,000,000. The total which she will promise to pay will amount on paper to probably 40 percent of her nominal obligation. The French government will also follow the Italian precedent in agreeing without express qualification to pay the full amount of the pledge. The bargain will be presented to the Senate promptly in the hope that it will be ratified before the proposed adjournment early in June.

The Senate has hesitated about the approval of the Italian settlement, and it will undoubtedly be still more reluctant to approve the arrangement with France. But the administration can summon plausible and powerful arguments in favor of prompt and unreserved ratification. The case for quick affirmative action will run about as follows. France needs and deserves all the help which she can obtain from her well-wishers. The price of the franc is sagging. What makes it sag is the difficulty which the French government is encountering in renewing its floating debt. These quick obligations are due to the amount of many billions in the near future and part of them will probably have to be redeemed by further issues of bank notes. Yet all that France now needs in order to escape from her financial morass is a little more time and some consideration on the part of her creditors for her actual difficulties. The recent increases in taxation will almost, if not quite, balance the budget; and if the government can obtain a breathing space until it begins to benefit by the new taxes, it can pull safely through. The American government and American finance alone can supply this breathing spell. An arrangement about the debt, supplemented by a loan, will restore confidence in the ability of the government to meet its obligations. As soon as such a settlement is reached and access to the American money market is reopened, the difficulty which the government is apprehending in renewing its maturing loans will disappear. The restoration of French credit in America will restore it in France. On the other hand if the United States refuses to settle on terms which French statesmen consider possible, and if France, consequently, is unable to borrow the money which will be required to meet immediate obligations and restore confidence, France may well suffer from the humiliation and the disaster of the débâcle of the franc and of national bankruptcy.

Such will be the argument and there is a mixture in it of truth and falsehood, of sound and of unsound finance and statesmanship which will not be easy to detect and to expose. France is entitled at this critical moment most assuredly to the utmost consideration. The position of the franc is precarious, and if it continues to fall the future of political and social order in France will be compromised. No government which will emerge as the result of disorder is likely to be as satisfactory to France's neighbors as is the present government of M. Briand, which is conciliatory, moderate and of indubitable loyalty to the Republic. The friends of France in other countries certainly have every reason to hope that M. Briand and the Republic will somehow pull through the crisis and to lend their assistance to that result. But if they are candid as well as loyal friends of France, they will be saddened and repulsed by certain conspicuously dubious aspects of the proposed bargain between the American and the French governments. It may even occur to them that in this as in previous cases Frenchmen are appealing to American generosity and friendliness to accept a settlement which will cost

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the American nation heavy sacrifices without being ultimately beneficial to France.

It is notorious that the proposed settlement with France, like the settlement with Italy, is intended to fool the American people into believing that they will be paid in the end a much larger percentage of the debt than they ever will be paid. We have talked with many French and many American financiers, and they agreed unanimously that as soon as it becomes really inconvenient for Italy and France to pay the increasing annuities, they will plead incompetence and ask to be relieved of their obligations. How soon this will be is a matter of guesswork. The time and the occasion will depend upon the vicissitudes of continental European politics during the next ten or fifteen years. There is no stability to public order in Europe. Its several governments are all living from hand to mouth. The future is so incalculable and threatening that they are willing to wager a great deal in future promises for the sake of easing their immediate difficulties. And in accepting these debt settlements both Italy and France are clearly entering into a bargain which they cannot and do not intend to keep. The pretense that the settlements are determined by ability to pay is fantastic. They pay practically nothing for the present, which is undoubtedly all they should in existing circumstances be asked to pay, but if they do not wish to, and cannot, pay anything now, it is incredible that a generation to whom the War is only a memory will be willing or able to pay such vast sums thirty or fifty years from now.

There is, however, another feature of the arrangement which attaches to it a more sinister complexion. Neither France nor Italy would pledge herself to pay in the future the proposed annuities, were it not for the fact that the pledge enables her to obtain in the American money market of today additional extensions of credit. These additional credits are justified on the assumption that they will enable the French and Italian governments to stabilize their currencies and to reëstablish their credit at home, but this justification also has its doubtful aspects. The stability of the French franc and of the Italian lira depends upon the future financial and political policies of the French and Italian governments. It is doubtful, as we shall see, whether the French budget is balanced. Probably Mussolini's adventure in the revival of Roman imperialism will involve Italy in military expenses which will be fatal to the financial equilibrium of his country. Nations whose governments have assumed and are obliged to evade such enormous debts are suffering presumably from internal weaknesses, which make them undesirable risks until these weaknesses are cured, and in the cases of France and Italy the cures have not yet taken place. Moreover it is probable that the necessity of paying interest on these new loans will make it increasingly difficult for France and Italy to meet the instalments on their existing debt to the American nation. As Edwin L. James pointed out in a recent cable to the New York Times, only a limited amount of exchange will be purchasable for the payment of interest in America; and if, as is probable, this amount of exchange is not sufficient to meet all the maturing obligations of French and Italian private business in this country, the service of the public debts will suffer.

For our part we sincerely doubt whether this proposed settlement with France is any more to the permanent advantage of the French than it is to the advantage of the American people. If our understanding of the financial and political situation in France is correct, the settlement and the loan may enable the French government to escape from its existing difficulties only to expose it at a later date to a still more critical attack. The argument in favor of the proposed settlement and of the new loan is based on the extremely doubtful premise that the recently passed financial legislation has finally balanced the French budget. There is every reason to believe that the balance exists in name only. The estimated revenues are approximately 37,500,000,000 francs and the estimated expenditures some 300,000,000 less. But critics point out that the expenditures are under-estimated and the revenue over-estimated. The calculation of the expenses was made many months ago when the franc was worth substantially more than it is today. Even if there is no further depreciation in the franc, and if there is no more extraordinary military expenditure it is likely that the cost of conducting the government will be 25 percent more than the estimate. On the other hand a large part of the increase in revenue is supposed to come from the new turn-over tax which according to the experts can be to a considerable extent evaded by changes in methods of conducting business. France is, consequently, just as doubtful a risk as she was two years ago when the débâcle of the franc was postponed by the borrowing of $100,000,000 in New York. The French government has not been able to balance the budget, and it has not even attempted to stabilize the franc. The laborious and costly work of financial reorganization has still to be undertaken. Until it is undertaken and carried through, French national bankruptcy is not averted; it is only postponed; and as a consequence of postponement, it is being rendered more costly. The question which the friends of France in other countries should ask themselves when their coöperation in some proposed plan of assistance is solicited is this: Will the proposed assistance tend to make the French nation face the realities of their financial problem, or will it merely enable them to enjoy a few additional months of respite while they continue to pile up unsound obligations?

In our opinion the proposed settlement with this country will merely postpone the day of real reckoning for France and increase its cost when it comes. It will not really benefit France to reopen the American money market to French public and pri-

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vate borrowers. Credit which was extended for other than business reasons and to which she was not entitled on financial grounds has been the ruin of France and it is time to shut down on the granting of it. The most desirable arrangement for the American government to negotiate with France would be a complete moratorium on the debt for fifteen or twenty years (provided Great Britain would do the same) but in the meantime a complete cessation of French long-term borrowing in the New York market. The vice of the proposed arrangement with France is not the smallness of the initial payments. We would like to see the war claims on France completely surrendered by the American nation provided French governments were not so eager to use the waiving of existing claims as a sufficient excuse for additional borrowing. The chief value of the war debt at the present time for this country and for France is the barrier which it erects against additional loans. For that reason and for that only the New Republic objects to its complete or partial cancellation.

Instalment Buying Again

MR. ALVIN JOHNSON'S dissent from our recent editorial, Where Instalment Buying Breaks, printed on another page of this issue, demands discussion not merely on account of the present widespread interest in this subject but because he raises a fundamental issue of economic theory which pertains to other important matters as well.

Before dealing with his contentions in detail we wish to delimit in one respect the scope of the debate—at least as far as we are concerned. No economic conclusion is established with scientific precision, we believe, unless it can be substantiated by some sound empirical test—either through a large number of careful observations, through controlled experiments of some sort, or through overwhelming quantitative evidence. Few theories indeed in the realm of economics can at present claim such sanction. The theory of industrial depressions, for instance, in spite of the amount of study it has recently received, is by no means fixed and final. Much less can anyone speak with finality on instalment buying, concerning which so little is known from experience. What we offered in our editorial, as well as what we shall set forth here, is not intended as "proof" of a final conclusion, but as explanation of a hypothesis which must be accepted or rejected tentatively, on the basis of reasonable opinion. The same qualification applies, in our belief, to most that has been and is being written on economic subjects.

Mr. Johnson's first objection is to our sample community in which income does not increase as instalment buying grows. In reality, he says, people are producers as well as consumers, and the sale of new goods brings new income to the sellers. Granted. But, in more detail, what happens? If a factory sells more automobiles by extending its time-payments, the first effect is to increase its profit. Those who share in the profit receive larger incomes. Those who receive interest on bonds and loans probably do not. Those who receive rent probably do not—at least for a time. Salaried employes may possibly benefit. Wage-earners—the great majority of those concerned—do not automatically benefit. Their wage rates may be increased, or they may not be. The production of the additional automobiles may have occasioned the hiring of additional wage-earners, and the more full employment of those already on the rolls, thus enlarging the total wage income. On the other hand, it may be achieved solely by more efficient machinery or management.

When we visualized our community with static income, we had in mind a community which we believe approximates the condition, during the past three years, of wage-earners, farmers and most salaried employes in the United States. So far as statistics of wage-earnings and the cost of living are available, they indicate that the real earnings of all the wage workers were no higher in 1925 than they were in 1923. Indeed there is ground for believing that they were lower in 1925, because a smaller number was employed. Farmers' incomes have not much increased, on the whole, at least since 1924. The gains in production have been achieved almost wholly by greater technical efficiency. The enlarged income from greater sales has thus accrued almost wholly to those who share in profits. We believe Mr. Johnson is mistaken in his "general principle" that "in the nature of the case there can be no increase in value production that is not an equal increase in general purchasing power"—if by general purchasing power he means, as we did, purchasing power pretty generally distributed among the bulk of retail consumers.

That brings us to his second point—that we are wrong in thinking that if real wages do not increase as rapidly as production there is danger of a crisis of "over-production." This doctrine, which originated with Rodbertus and Karl Marx, he implies is discredited today. Mr. Johnson's theory is, indeed, that now prevalent among the orthodox, though his statement of it is somewhat extreme. Nevertheless numerous contemporary economists of repute, notably Veblen and J. A. Hobson, have maintained in modified forms the doctrine that a discrepancy between wage-earners' purchasing power and productive capacity may lead to industrial depression. We doubt whether those scholars who have studied the business cycle most carefully would be willing to assert positively that this theory may not at times be true. We do not believe, and have never maintained, that this is the only explanation of the business cycle, or that "increasing working-class income would offer a general cure for over-production crises." Nevertheless we believe that in

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a situation like the present insufficient working-class income is a considerable factor of danger. Why?

Because we disagree with Mr. Johnson's assertion that "today the immense development of quality production has robbed the distinction between wages purchasing power and profits purchasing power of any real validity." Let us think of the situation in concrete terms. Wage-earners, small salary-earners and farmers make up perhaps 85 percent of the income-receiving population. The bulk of the income from profits goes to a relatively small percentage of the people. If we do not increase the incomes of the 85 percent, and concentrate increased income on the 15 percent, what is the effect on the market for manufactured goods? On the one hand, we delimit the market for the less expensive goods produced by quantity methods. Ford, Chevrolet, Essex, Overland and numerous other types of cars made by millions in the aggregate reach the limit of their market. The same is true of the less expensive furniture, radios and virtually all the other articles a large part of whose sale is financed by instalment credit. On the other hand, we somewhat increase the market for Rolls-Royce, Locomobile, Pierce-Arrow, Packard and other cars made in much smaller quantities, and for expensive apartments, country houses, and all articles of consumption used primarily by the higher income groups. These articles are not so dependent for their sale on instalment purchases.

Even if there were merely involved, in this shift of demand, a shift of equipment and labor power from one class of goods to another, there might be a considerable disturbance in the business world. We hardly think any banker would view with equanimity a simultaneous over-production of virtually all consumers' goods used by the 85 percent of small income, even if accompanied by an equivalent under-production of the more expensive goods. We admit that it is conceivable that as productive efficiency increases, all the benefit may eventually go to the higher income groups, and that in the long run the whole working population may be kept busy making an increasing number of goods for the rich. Yet in practice such a progression could hardly take place without a series of shocks to the great industries whose growth is dependent on widespread popular demand, and through them, to the general business structure. It is really quantity production, rather than quality production, which is characteristic of the machine age.

More than this, however, is involved. The higher income groups do not customarily spend as much of their incomes for current satisfaction as do the lower. Corporations which make large profits customarily salt away as much as half of them in surplus accounts. Individuals receiving large incomes invest much of their gains. Thus the new purchasing power, if concentrated, does not make itself felt in the market for consumers' goods as quickly as it may if it is widely distributed. Part of the savings will eventually be used for new construction, new productive capacity. This brings a shift, not merely from the production of one class of consumers' goods to the production of another, but from the production of consumers' goods to the production of capital goods. This shift is likely to occasion industrial dislocation. And the new capital goods resulting from investment are likely to consist largely in productive equipment for low-priced articles—since much of the profits and savings have arisen from the manufacture of such articles. Such investment will aggravate, for the time being, any over-production arising in the manufacture of these articles. In order to visualize an economic order in which business proceeds smoothly while all increments to production of consumers' goods accrue to the higher income groups, it would be necessary to visualize one in which all new capital investment is designed for the production of the more expensive goods. Neither knowledge nor economic habit is at present attuned to such an order.

It is even contended by Foster and Catchings in their book on Profits that some of the purchasing power accumulated by business in a period of prosperity never reaches any market at all. It is, they say, drawn off into pockets in the economic system where it remains merely on paper in the form of various accounts, and does not circulate or create a market for real goods and services. We shall not enter here into a discussion of this intricate hypothesis, except to indicate that it furnishes another caveat on the orthodox theory enunciated by Mr. Johnson.

In conclusion, let us make it clear that we do not condemn the general practice of extending credit to consumers. Credit to consumers, especially to those of small income, may be of social benefit, if properly safe-guarded and controlled. We do point out, however, that credit can furnish no substitute for an increase in the real incomes of consumers parallel with the increase in productivity of consumers' goods. In our opinion the recent gigantic extension of the instalment plan is due to the beating of a rapidly increasing productive capacity against a market limited by a popular purchasing power which does not grow as fast as the product. It is a delusion to believe that credit can go on being expanded indefinitely with no expansion in the incomes on which it is based. If retail consumers discount their future purchasing power in order to buy an increased product, there must come a time when the production of the goods they buy will be correspondingly curtailed, provided their incomes in the meantime do not increase as rapidly as the goods offered them for sale. The chief difference between granting enlarged credit to owners of productive plants and granting it to retail consumers is that in the former case there is some assurance that the income of the borrower will grow as a result, whereas in the latter case there is no such assurance.

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North Dakota Five Years After

FOR several years prior to about 1922, much was said and written about the great "North Dakota experiment." The series of state-operated enterprises inaugurated there during the régime of the Nonpartisan League was praised or denounced by commentators, according to their personal opinions, as being the dawn of a new era of freedom, or an attempt to introduce "Bolshevism" which was sure to result in disappointment and failure. The Nonpartisan League, as is well known, received a series of setbacks in 1920 and 1921. In the former year, the great Harding landslide resulted in the election of some state officials hostile to the League, and in the enactment of a law which, through a joker unnoticed by most of the voters, gravely imperiled an important project, the state Bank of North Dakota. In 1921, a recall election went even further in destroying the influence of the League. From that time until 1925, the state administrations have been predominantly hostile.

Probably most of the people of the United States assume that the whole Nonpartisan League experiment has been a failure. The impression has been skilfully and effectively spread abroad that the various enterprises inaugurated by the state fell of their own weight, and that North Dakota, enlightened and repentant, is today resolved to commit no more sins of the same variety. This was the burden of an article in a recent issue of The Nation's Business, the official organ of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, to which we have already referred in the columns of the New Republic. The article was advertised in large space in the newspapers, as giving conclusive evidence that state ownership and operation of "business enterprises" is an inevitable and invariable failure. Those who voted for La Follette in 1924 were rebuked for not having learned this "lesson of history," and the citizens of New York state in particular were warned against the pending proposals for public ownership of water power and for state-aided housing for the poor. In regard to North Dakota, a series of specific charges were made which may be summarized as follows:

> The Home Building Association built only fifty homes, at a cost 61 percent higher than was estimated, and with a total loss exceeding $300,000.
>
> The grain elevator built at a cost of $3,044,000, could be duplicated at $1,500,000. The operating loss in four years was a million dollars.
>
> The Bank of North Dakota, after two years of Nonpartisan League operation, had a "paper deficit" of $100,000, and auditors estimated that if immediate liquidation had been required, the loss would have been from $1,500,000 to $2,000,000.
>
> The hail insurance monopoly has been forced to adopt a zone system of rate application which private companies have followed.
>
> "The lesson North Dakota learned in her enterprise in state ownership is that government and business do not mix."

These are serious charges. How much truth is there in them, and in the general picture of conditions in North Dakota which The Nation's Business draws?

It should be admitted at once that the Nonpartisan League made plenty of mistakes, both as a political organization and as the directing force behind the program of state-owned enterprise. It tried to do too much, and to go too fast. It suffered, just as many a private business institution has suffered, from unwise leadership, too often animated by the exuberant spirit of the promoter.

But it suffered also because of two other factors which need to be taken into account. One of these was the great depression of 1920-21, wherein the whole Middle West suddenly found itself (for several reasons, of which the deflation policy of the Federal Reserve Board was one) plunged from a period of unexampled prosperity into practical bankruptcy. Financial institutions all through the wheat and corn belts closed their doors—the proportion in North Dakota being no higher than might reasonably have been expected. The suicide rate among farmers suddenly went up; farmers' children had to come home from college because there was no money to continue their education. All things considered, North Dakota, then in full Nonpartisan League control, weathered the storm quite as well as anyone had the right to ask.

The second factor which must be remembered is the unending, powerful opposition of the large financial interests of the country. The bankers and grain men of Minneapolis and Chicago, and their New York allies, looked upon the Nonpartisan League as an insolent and dangerous uprising. It was not, of course, a new and unheralded phenomenon. For generations the farmers had been complaining that they were at the mercy of the middleman, forced to sell their crops at the moment of harvest and at whatever price he chose to pay. As early as 1893, a state-owned grain elevator was approved, and funds voted for its construction, by the North Dakota legislature, though the project was not carried out. Repeatedly thereafter, the farmers besought the lawmakers for relief from their absolute dependence on the grain-buyers; but it was not until after they were brutally told, in 1915, to "go home and slop the hogs" that they were sufficiently roused to get together in an effective political organization.

From first to last, the business interests never ceased their warfare against the "North Dakota idea." During this period the red hysteria was at its height, and the professional patrioteers were dragged in to help crush the farmers' revolt. Few things have been so unanimously and consistently lied about as the Nonpartisan League program. Its enemies within the state were always plentifully

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supplied with funds, and used them effectively. Efforts were made to have the courts declare the new laws unconstitutional. When the time came to sell bonds based on the state enterprises, the money markets of New York and Chicago were found to be closed against them. An initiated law in 1920 provided that the county treasurers and other local fiscal agents "might" deposit funds elsewhere than in the Bank of North Dakota. This law was passed by the innocent voters, and was promptly used to create what was practically a run on the bank, thirty-seven of fifty-one county treasurers at once demanding all their funds, at the moment when the depression was at its worst. In eleven months $22,000,000 was withdrawn. Sixty lawsuits were also started against the Bank, of which it won fifty-nine.

At present the farm loans made through the Bank aggregate more than $23,000,000, at an average interest rate of 6.1 percent. The average rate paid by North Dakota farmers for real estate loans floated privately is 8.35 percent, according to the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The difference in interest to the borrowers from the Bank is thus well over half a million dollars annually.

Despite the calamity of deflation, and the fight of organized wealth, the status of the Nonpartisan League program in North Dakota is far from accurately represented in the article in The Nation's Business. The fact is, that with only one exception, every enterprise inaugurated by the League is still in operation. No one today dares propose the repeal of any of the legislation; only one item among all the laws passed, the grain grading measure, has been declared unconstitutional. Instead of being politically unpopular at present, the League won eight of twelve state offices at the last election, and one seat in Congress.

The statement that the state elevator, which cost $3,044,000, could be duplicated for $1,500,000, turns out to be merely an estimate by a state official that it ought to be carried on the books at the latter sum. It undoubtedly could be duplicated today for much less than it cost, when built at the peak of high prices. It is also true that when first opened, under a state administration bitterly hostile to the League, it lost money. It lost, for instance, $101,000 in 1923. But the next year, 1924, it earned an operating profit of $78,626, and in 1925 this was increased to $143,482.

Also, a state elevator might earn its way from the citizen's point of view even if it remained "in the red ink." Since North Dakota's was built, the cost of flour to the consumer has decreased in that state by an average amount of $1.93 a barrel, while the producer of the wheat for that flour is getting an equal increase. Ignoring the producer, the saving in the flour bill of North Dakota's housewives is itself nearly $1,800,000 a year. The building of the elevator may not be responsible for this saving—but it exists, as a coincidence if nothing more. The elevator is also proving of enormous value to North Dakota as a means of emphasizing the superior protein content of the state's wheat, through which the farmers hope to be able to secure a special price for their product irrespective of the market in general.

What of the other items in the indictment by The Nation's Business? Through what we trust was a slip of the pen, it mentioned the failure of the state-owned packing plant. North Dakota never had a state-owned packing plant. The reference is probably to a privately owned coöperative plant. The charge as to the home-building program is on the whole correct. The enterprise was mismanaged and disappointing, just as many private enterprises are mismanaged and disappointing. As for the state insurance system, the fire and tornado insurance fund has $800,000, the hail insurance $3,000,000, the state bonding fund $250,000, all of these having started with an empty treasury. The hail insurance rate is one-third lower than the private rate, and the saving to policy-holders as compared to what they would have paid the private companies is estimated at $26,000,000. These types of insurance are functioning successfully. It should be added that at no time during the whole period of the Nonpartisan League program have North Dakota taxes been any higher than in surrounding states.

In short, a fair investigation of the facts discloses no justification for the assumptions made by The Nation's Business. What North Dakota has done no more demonstrates the impossibility of state ownership and operation of important utilities than does the operation of the post office by the United States government, or the ownership of scores of enterprises by virtually every country in Europe. The Nonpartisan League's history proves, what might have been known in advance, that inexperienced men make mistakes, and that a serious financial depression such as that of 1920-21 works havoc. But it does not upset the contention that the farmer is and always has been at the mercy of the middleman, or suggest any other method for remedying this situation than the one the Nonpartisan League took.

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The Confession of an Editorial Writer

I

IF my confessions as an editorial writer are not worth reading, it is not for lack of experience. I have written editorials assiduously throughout the whole of a longish life. I began over forty years ago, then a boy of fourteen, as the amanuensis of a predecessor in the same occupation. During hours every day for many months of the year I scribbled patiently in long hand his comments on the affairs of the day. Although by no means industrious by nature, I rather liked it. Sometimes I could write for hours accurately and legibly without at the end preserving any memory of what I had written. Later, in spite of these lapses into unconsciousness, I acquired so much familiarity with the run of my dictator's opinions that he sometimes asked me to write editorial paragraphs for him. I have continued to write them ever since. I have written them in dailies, in weeklies, in monthlies and in trade journals. I have written them in the most harassing and in the most favorable conditions and for the supposed benefit of all manner of ideas and causes. I have written books which were only prolonged editorials and narratives which were only disguised editorials. I have written these miles of copy on the whole not because I had to, but because I wished to. It was a vocation. I confess it.

As a young man of twenty-one fresh from college I did not look forward to becoming the President of the United States or a Captain of Industry or a Toreador or a Great Lover or a Poet or a Saint or a Man of Destiny. I looked forward to writing editorials. A humble ambition and one which was suited to my peculiar disabilities. I had a genuine desire for self-expression in words but no gift for their use. I wrote irrepressibly, laboriously, purposefully and without distinction. My judgment was flexible, prompt, usually circumspect and occasionally most infirm. But when it was infirm I was usually aware of its infirmity. On most occasions I was probably too self-confident. I was an easy but not always a permanent victim of good conventional illusions. I was handicapped by an impoverished imagination except for ideas, a deficient sensibility and nothing in particular to write about. If I was to live by writing, I had to write about things in general for a public in general. Behold the vocation. Whatever an editorial writer is, he is neither a stylist, an expert nor in any way an exceptional or an exclusive performer. He is the typical publicist. It is his business to make the broadcasting of opinions personally and socially profitable.

There are, of course, other publicists besides the writers of editorials. The essayist, the critic of manners and customs, the historian and the philosopher—all of them explore selected subject matter for particular classes of readers. But the editorial writer occupies a niche of his own. For the most part both his audience and his subject matters are imposed upon him. He is a journalist. He must attach meanings to the promiscuous tide of events for the benefit of readers whose minds are almost as fluid and indiscriminate as the events. He cannot pick and choose as others can. The world he has always with him—the world just as it happens from day to day and in particular just as it is distorted and distracted by the headlines. He must have ready a rapid comment on every new disclosure of an inexhaustible panorama which, as it unwinds before him, has already been subject to a fantastic process of dramatization. There is no common scale to the succession of pictures or to the different parts of the same picture. As a matter of daily routine he may have to discourse upon such grandiose affairs as the home-coming of conquerors, the eruption of revolutions, the wrecking or the saving of civilization, the birth of stars, the resurrection of the dead, the celebration of new truths and most of all the protection of old ones against irreverence. Yet the intellectual network which is strong enough to take care of the whales must be fine enough to prevent the little fishes from escaping. He must be equally ready to expatiate sympathetically and importantly on the price of lard, the winner of the last beauty contest or baseball game, the behavior of the weather and in general all the scandal, gossip and petty irrelevances which pass for good news. Nothing, alas! that is actual, evanescent, significant or insignificant in human life lies outside of his province. He is saddled with an absurd vicarious responsibility for the way of the world, the conduct of human affairs and the damnation or salvation of mankind.

Of course, he cannot do it. No human intelligence is sufficiently wide-awake, fluid, casual, well informed, wary, intelligent and disinterested to pass judgment on so many different affairs—to instruct statesmen how to run the government, business men how to conduct industry, Supreme Court Justices how to expound the Constitution, clergymen how to save souls, scientists how to achieve truth and the average man how to live happily forever after. He is caught in one of those impossible occupations, like that of a priest, a king or a judge, into which the necessary pretenses of human life under social conditions inveigle so many miserable sinners. He should be, consequently, a peculiarly fitting subject for a confession—much more so in respect to his occupation than an artist, a craftsman, an engineer, a mechanic or anybody who carries on some unpretentious primary activity. No candid writer of editorials should deny himself the benefit of a frank conversation with his conscience.

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II

During a large part of my own career as an editorial writer, I took my occupation innocently and confidently and did not trouble myself about its shortcomings and my own. I cannot say when the process of recognition and repentance began, but years ago it gradually dawned on me that I myself, particularly in relation to my work, might not stand up under editorial comment as well as many of the subjects which I was writing about. It took me some time, however, to find out what was really the matter. At first I was bothered by my lack of equipment and by the impossibility of remedying it. I did not know enough to write with genuine authority about all the subjects of my editorials, and I never could know enough. But the very completeness of this admission finally quieted my uneasiness. My default in this respect was obvious; it was incorrigible, and it was inseparable from the occupation. As an expert about everything I was a failure, but why bother about a failure to reach the impossible? When I tried to conceive what a universal specialist would be, I found myself face to face with a monstrous absurdity. If it was an absurdity, the editorial writer was bound to derive his function and what authority he had from a source totally different from that of the specialist.

In self-justification I fell back on a theory of the editorial writer as an intellectual mediator for all the people, which I shall have to state at some length. Intellectual mediation is the art of fertilizing experiences and activities by exchanging their mental tickets. Experiences and activities come and go and leave behind traces of their passage which individuals organize into disorderly groups of opinions. These opinions are frequently published and passed on for the purpose of justifying or explaining the activities. The relation between the individual or social activities and public opinion is analogous to the relation between economic goods and services and the currency by which they are exchanged. The currency forms no part of the mechanism of production, but it provides a medium of transfer by which the comparative values of goods are measured, and it exerts a profound indirect effect on the incentives which determine the volume and quality of production. This medium of exchange, even when issued by unimpeachable social authority, is itself of uncertain value and hence is something of a sham. People who receive and pay dollars as if they were always what they pretend to be—that is, the same thing as the dollars of yesterday or tomorrow—are being fooled. But if goods are to be produced and services rendered in sufficiently abundant quantities, society must set up a common denominator with which to measure and exchange them, even though the denominator itself be shifty. So it is with the activities of life and the ideas which mediate among them. If public opinion in which the values of one activity could be measured against another activity were wanting, the activities would either cease to exist or assume a much more primitive form.

Editorials are, of course, only a minor issue in this currency of social values. The circulating medium of ideas is floated for the most part by people who carry on special activities or promote special interests. They consist partly of information about what is going on and partly of affirmations of the specific or general value which these interested people attach to what they do or propose to do. But inasmuch as these ideas compete with one another and challenge comparisons, society must provide for the work of comparing them. The people who undertake it are called intellectuals, with the philosophers at the top of the list and the editorial writers at the bottom. We scarcely deserve to be classed with the philosophers, but we share with them an indispensable social function. The casual garrulous journalism of ideas does help to associate popular consciousness with popular activities. It renders the process of social communication more viable. Intellectual mediation has to be carried on in currency of small denominations as well as in currency of large denominations. The editorial writer issues the pennies and farthings, whose purchasing power is insignificant but which enable the cheaper social values to be exposed and exchanged. Without such a vehicle of intercourse for all the people, the heart of a self-governing democracy would not beat and its blood would not circulate.

In the case of this petty currency, it seems superficially to make little difference whether they are or are not what they pretend to be. Coppers are coppers. It does not pay to counterfeit them. Their serviceability depends on their quantity and on their acceptability, not on their quality. Editorials are the means whereby conversations are carried on among social groups and they have the same importance and drawbacks for society as conversation has for individuals. The man who proclaims a conviction in conversation does not usually pretend to have said anything which other people are under any obligation to believe. He assumes only that he is worth listening to, which may or may not be true. He is offering to exchange experimental opinions. Such trial balloons, no matter whether expressed in an editorial or in a conversation, may be almost worthless as an expression of truth. But they serve their social purpose if they stimulate both the individual who utters them and him who reads them to seek some better approximation to truth.

It follows that the work of an editorial writer like the work of a philosopher is essentially speculative. An editorial is an occasional comment on the vicissitudes of human affairs. Like the event which it celebrates, it cannot be certified. Its author is gambling. He can no more avoid mistakes than an insurance company can avoid losses. If he con-

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fined himself to the utterance of those opinions of which he was justifiably certain, he would remain inarticulate most of the time and still he would often go astray. It is futile to play safe. The New York Times in its editorials does its best to play safe and almost always misleads its readers. In so far as life has a meaning and a purpose, it is irremediably speculative. The specialist obtains some measure of certainty only by artificially abstracting the subject of his interest from the concrete reality. The insurance company discounts without eliminating the risk. The editorial writer has to take his chance with other people who have to undertake perilous journeys without even the possibility of surveying the road.

III

Such is the theory, and I still think there is something in it. But I soon realized that by easing the burden of a fictitious scruple, it only awakened a more unmanageable substitute. The difficulty is that the facts do not wholly square with the theory. Although editorial writers may perform the function of intellectual mediation, they are rarely satisfied with it. They see themselves rather as spiritual uplifters and architects than as vehicles of social communication, but they are architects without having educated themselves to build living structures in a real world. The temples which they plan are situated in Arcady or in some similarly imaginary underworld.

It is, I think, useful to compare editorials to the petty currency of social intercourse, but the comparison interprets only part of what takes place in the minds of the writers and readers of editorials. Editorials rarely stimulate either one or the other to seek some better approximation to the truth for themselves. When I write an editorial, I am not conversing with my readers; I am usually telling them what is what. To be sure, they hand me a penny for my thoughts, but how often do I believe that my pearls of opinion are worth no more than a penny? On the other hand, if I succeed in being honest with myself, how can I protect my readers from expecting too much from me? Are not many of them bound to confuse my cheap words with the glittering counters of some enterprise of their own to get rich in truth quick and by proxy? If I am an adroit writer I use my dexterity to increase their suggestibility and my own. Our thoughts are so determined by our desires that it is almost impossible both for an editorial writer and for some of his readers not to gild his coppers and not to hoard the foolish coins rather than the goods of the spirit which they ought to represent.

The editorial writer is a gambler in two senses. Not only does he comment on the vicissitudes of human life as if he knew more about them than he can, but he is impelled to stake heavy wagers with himself and other people on the vindication of his credit. He cannot carry on without a cultivated and fortified confidence in his wits, in his star and in his right to win. This confidence is the umbrella which he must carry to shelter himself against the stinging hail and the drenching rain of an indifferent and unedifying world. Other pretenders are allowed to dress the part. The emperor wears a crown and wraps himself in purple. The judge presides over his domain in a cap and gown and punishes the irreverent for contempt of court. The priest mounts a pulpit and buttons his collar in the back. The editor has no title to a throne or bench or pulpit or any robes of authority. Yet his occupation is as much in need of credit as any of theirs. His natural desire to play his part bravely almost forces him into magnifying the pretensions of his job. He parades under the veil of anonymity the valor of ignorance. He makes sounds as if his editorials issued like an oracle from some divinely subsidized source, and they sound sonorous in his own ears.

I have for a long time recognized in myself a gambler in ideas who in placing his wagers was denied the benefit of any actuary to estimate the probable percentage of losses. But I never realized until recently how innocently and inexorably I compensated by intellectual and moral bravado for the hazards of my profession. An actor finds it difficult to avoid being vain. A priest has to labor in order to escape hypocrisy. Lawyers can hardly practice their profession without falling into equivocal subtleties. We editorial writers are invited by the nature of our occupation to consider ourselves right. No matter how much we intend or try to guard against it, we can scarcely avoid the imputing of too much authority to our own pronouncements. The world exists for us as the permanent possibility of editorial edification. We puff ourselves up by identifying our personalities with the godly work of shedding light and energy upon an obscure and erratic planet. The more sincere we are the more insidious the illusion. Notwithstanding a certain contempt which I always felt for the quality of my work, I have until recently lived by the belief that my pennies of published opinion were by some alchemy transformed in the minds of my readers into the gold of truth and righteousness.

This self-identification with an alleged virtuous interpretation of the news brings with it a kind of foolish exhilaration. My vicarious professional responsibility for the way of the world has cast me for ghostly participation in the dramas of the day. I do not, of course, by my imaginative intrusions attain the same pitch of emotional zest as does the statesman whose whole credit may be staked on his success in carrying through his immediate enterprise. My wagers are spread thin over a vast area of human activity, but if they lack something in intensity, they make up for it in number and in variety. The morning newspaper contains tidings that my star is either waxing or waning, that my

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wits are failing or magnifying me. I am absorbed and fascinated by the habit of anticipating and watching the fall of the cards. It is an exciting life, but its excitement, like its valor, is born of wishful ignorance. When I look back on the thrills which have come and gone, they seem to be somehow denatured. There is something dissipating in allowing myself to be emotionally compromised by so many indifferent and equivocal transactions. As a matter of fact I am so much absorbed in the fate of my little wagers that my judgment falters in dealing with the actual vicissitudes of human affairs. I drug myself into dreaming that the world is good when it is going my way and bad when it disappoints me. That, to be sure, is the oldest and most universal of human dreams, but it is a dream which, if it actually expresses the truth about my way of practicing my profession, makes me look to myself like a counterfeiter who is not as yet caught.

IV

I fully realize that my personal predicament is merely a modern version of an old and apparently incorrigible infirmity of the human intelligence—the same infirmity of which the Athenian elders accused the sophists. But I am not yet ready to give my occupation up. There may be ways of correcting the infirmity which have not yet been sufficiently tried, and as a matter of fact I can, as I think, already, detect on my map of the world the faint trace of such a route. It will not be easy in the space which remains at my disposal to indicate the location and direction of the route, and at best it seems to lead up a grade which may require too long and steep a climb for such a heavily harnessed old stage horse as myself. But the slope of the hill is plainly visible with a beacon on the top, and it looks remote and inaccessible, but not entirely impossible.

The preceding analysis of the source of my professional turpitude seems to close all ways of escape except one. I wish to have my coppers of opinion recognized as coppers by myself and other people, to avoid the hoarding of them as silver and gold and to feel some assurance that their circulation will help rather than hinder the search for some better approximation to the truth. Inasmuch as the over-valuation of the coppers by myself and others who are famished for gold is the source of the difficulty, it would seem as if an invitation to doubt rather than to believe would, if it were placed at the head of the first column of every editorial page, do much to convert editorial writing into an honest profession. No doubt it would to some extent. Methodical scepticism will have a function to perform in the future economy, not only of thinking but of living, much more important than that which it has played during the ages of verbal authority. But scepticism, transformed as it would be into an inveterate curiosity about life, is a different thing from scepticism in its conventional shape of the denial of conventional opinions. Curiosity not only challenges authority, but it is fully prepared tentatively and experimentally to assume responsibility for beliefs. What we editors need is a method of cutting opinions to suit the rapidly changing body of an editor's problems without depriving our own minds of continuity and integrity and without pretending to ourselves and others that in this business fine feathers make fine birds.

If there is any answer to this question which will arrest the alert and mature human mind of today, it must depend upon the application of an experimental scientific method to those problems of human conduct which hitherto have been unlocked only by the keys of wholly reckless speculation or verbal authority. But how scientific method can be corrected so as to perform for the subject matter of human conduct the service which it is performing for the transactions of nature is a question which not only remains unanswered, but which only recently has been properly asked. Natural science is an account of the world so far as its processes can be traced from the outside. It exists only in so far as its suppositions are verified by public events. On the other hand the kind of knowledge which the editorial writer pretends to purvey contains an irreducible infusion of individual selection, the justification for which will consist not only in the subsequent verification of public events, but also in the adequacy of some collection of internal and inaccessible personal values. This element of personality cannot be separated from editorials or other opinion without emptying out opinion with personality, and we cannot throw opinion overboard without dispensing at the same time with social intercourse and human society. The application of scientific method to human conduct does not mean, consequently, even the attempt to attach to opinions which are significant for conduct the same kind of certitude which belongs to verified scientific hypotheses. Such certitude is the result of an abstraction from reality as a whole. It is this kind of assurance, achieved by similar means, which is all the specialist expert can contribute to the cure of individual and social delusions. The combined wisdom of all the most consummate experts on all subjects accessible by their methods would not help us to manage and control human conduct unless we could transpose their skyscrapers of special knowledge into the dimensions of individual experience. That is a job which we must all do for ourselves, and in the doing of it, the special techniques of the several sciences are of no assistance.

What chance have I, then, of obtaining from scientific method the protection which I need against the inflation of my opinions? In so far as I can see only by freeing my consciousness of self from its habit of self-vindication. I inflate my opinions by confusing the fortunes, the strivings and the pretenses of my personality with the validity

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of the opinions, and in order to deflate my opinions I must contrive to detach this personality from its domination over my intellectual activity. I shall need for this purpose to apply to my own behavior a keen and indefatigable sword of attention which would be thrust in two directions. On the one hand it would try consciously to disidentify the particular activities and opinions which occupied my mind from my sense of myself. On the other, it would seek to fill the empty space which this process of disidentification left in its wake with new opinions which, being partly freed from the domination of an over-aggressive or an under-unaggressive personality, would have become more disinterested and inclusive and would have a better chance of collecting around something objective.

I am afraid that the way out which I have just indicated will not be intelligible to many readers who have followed me so far on my confessional journey, and I am afraid, also, that unless as a result of their own experience they jump quickly at what I mean, I shall be wholly unable to bring it home to them in the few hundred words that remain at my disposal. But if they recognize the force and origin of the indictment which on the day of judgment can fairly be brought against the issuers of popular intellectual currency, they will understand that nothing short of the purging of personality from opinion will repair the fault. This purging will necessarily assume the nature of a continuous conscious pressure which will guard itself against confusing the dissociation of personality from opinion with the annihilation of personality or with the attempt to escape from the hazards of opinion. The object of this conscious pressure will be to transform both personality and opinion by introducing a neutral element into their association. If we can use our consciousness to puncture the pretensions of our personalities, we shall have removed the most stubborn obstacle to a contact between our minds and the real world.

Obviously the framing or the utterance of this formula does not of itself start the work of disidentification in motion. The truth which may be contained in the formula can be fully revealed only to those who practice the conscious art of disidentifying ourselves from what we observe of our own experience. It is almost an unknown and unpracticed art at present, but it is not impossible and futile merely because schools do not expect to teach it. It is merely a modern form of the religious aspiration which induced the saints to scourge their flesh in the effort to purify the spirit. We know now that the scourging of the flesh is not, except by accident, an agent of purification. Yet we need as much as ever to purify our hearts, and if it can be done at all, it can be done only by objectifying opinions. Unless the intellectual can find some way of separating his personality from his opinions, he will continue to lose authority to the specialist who for another reason is quite as incapable of issuing a trustworthy currency for general circulation as he is.

I am easing my conscience for the present, consequently, by experiments in the art of watching my behavior without imputing what I think or do to my real self. Instead of treating the world as the permanent possibility of being edified by my virtuous opinions, I am treating it as something which must primarily be inspected through the eyeglasses of my own feelings and interests, but always with the deliberate intention of separating what I observe from the coloring which my personality gives it. There seems to be a chance that in this way I may build up within myself a vision of the world and of my relation to it whose reports are not tainted at their source. In order to have any power of edifying or coördinating worldly processes and activities for the benefit of my readers, I must begin by coördinating the instinctive, emotional and intellectual activities which make up my own life. Coördination like charity must find a home in the individual spirit, or it will have to satisfy itself with a habitation in churches, states and other institutions; and it is absurd even to seek the kind of coördination which we editorial writers among others need unless we can learn how to purify, stretch and intensify individual consciousness. Such is the conclusion of my confession. Or perhaps it is only the conclusion of another editorial.

(This is the fifth in a series of anonymous confessions, in which men and women in various occupations and walks of life are giving their spiritual or professional autobiographies. Another will be published soon.)

To R. L. S.

When the young heart among the spring
  Of buds puts all its morals on,
And finds a sad excess to sing
  In the few summers that are gone,
    Your speculative shade, again intent,
    Renews its argument.

Happy renewal! Still you take
  The young men to your upland places,
And still your paramours you make
  The maidens with divining faces;
    The wells of knowledge are your faith, and thence
    A larger innocence.

And if the wearier pedants cry
  Upon the ardors of your page,
Your lyric sermons yet defy
  The chill severities of age,
    And daily still are honored in the code
    Of youth upon the road.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

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Notes on the Changing South

The Shadow of the Machine

OUR Southern states are at present the scene of fundamental changes—changes which will certainly reshape economic organization and reformulate cultural aspirations. The Old South, possessed of a deep folk-tenacity, endured for a half-century after the Civil War. It exists no more. During fifty years of pain economy the South maintained its cultural integrity and its politico-economic unity; both have now been dissipated by one decade of rapid economic expansion.

The Machine has at last invaded the South-Atlantic states. Its shadow falls upon the entire area from Newport News to New Orleans with here and there dark spots symptomatic of the future. Of course, machines have been seeping into the South for many years but these were quickly lost in the vast agricultural expanse. Now machines come more rapidly, in greater quantities, and they begin to manifest the tendency to cluster about certain centres. Birmingham is the Pittsburgh, High Point the Grand Rapids, and Atlanta the New York of the New South. In one county of North Carolina there are already more than one hundred large cotton mills in operation.

What brings the machines? Well, machines have no choice; they go wherever their owners send them. There is no effective trade unionism in the Southern states. Owners of machines—the short-sighted ones—believe this to be highly advantageous to their enterprises; so long as the workers are unorganized, they—the employers—can dictate the terms of labor. The immediate labor supply comes from so-called pure Anglo-Saxon stock. This, supposedly, eliminates at one stroke the problem of the foreigner, socialism, strikes, high wages and all the fears of the machine-owners. Machines go where there are promises of cheap power of both kinds, human and mechanical. Great rivers flow from the Southern highlands to the sea like the strands of a giant fan. Muscle Shoals is the symbol of this potential resource. There is as yet no adequate outlet for its power but the Tuscaloosa River is already being crossed by a dam which will soon rival Muscle Shoals in the production of inexpensive power.

And what do the machines bring with them? Prosperity of course, and much besides. Political control invariably attaches itself to economic power. Authority in the state of Alabama resides in industrialized Birmingham, not in the state capital at Montgomery. The manufacturers of one state have with effrontery told a great university that its investigators must not study certain industrial processes and phenomena. In proportion as the machine-invasion is successful in accelerating the growth of urban centres, agriculture is neglected. This process is followed by important consequences. The white population of the South is destined to become an industrial civilization. Negroes, on the other hand, who submit to the machine less readily, will become possessors of the land. The "black belt" of the future will be the rural South. Hundreds of Tuskegees and Hamptons will be needed if this adjustment is made successfully.

In any case, the dominant culture of the coming South will be urban in character and flavor. It will take its cues from Rotary, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturers' Association and not from the country store, church or school. To those who regard all human rural products as "yokels," this will be a welcome shift. They should remember, however, that wherever the shadow of the machine has fallen in the past the ensuing civilization has become stereotyped, standardized, dull and uninspiring. Southern cities already show signs of all these infections.

The Coolidge Penetration

There are indications that hell and calomel are losing ground, but the Southern voter still clings to the Democratic party. The so-called Solid South is nevertheless crumbling at the corners. Roosevelt was a great and admirable figure to the Southerner of two decades ago but none would have voted for him. Today Coolidge is less great and admirable but he could gather an unbelievably large number of votes in every Southern state if he needed them. The business men and manufacturers will continue to vote for Democratic candidates (in most cases there are no others) for state and local offices but they and their wives will henceforth be Republicans with respect to national politics. Educators and professionals will also follow this lead, but perhaps more tardily. Machines have done this, too!

Naturally the Southern voter who has vested interests will attach himself to the party which promises safest protection to those interests. The Republican party has a consistent and favorable history in this direction and deserves the votes of all those who desire special privileges. Not that the Democratic party could in its present state of debility do anything different but it has at least a finer tradition. In any case, the party labels are losing their glue and are fast becoming indistinguishable. The commercialist is able to capitalize this also: he can use the Democratic party for his purposes at home and the Republican party for those same purposes abroad. And he'll not be inconsistent in doing so, merely clever and enlightened on behalf of self-interest.

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What will happen if the long chance comes true and Al Smith secures the Democratic nomination for the Presidency? Three things might happen: Southerners might vote for him, they might nominate an independent candidate or they might stay away from the polls. They will, I believe, follow the last-named course. I am now speaking of farmers and non-factory workers; the urban, manufacturing, commercial vote will go—unless the opposition makes terrible blunders—to the Republican candidate. Lowden of Illinois is popular in all sections of the South and if he were a Democrat he could, as a candidate, evoke considerable enthusiasm; he might even carry the South in combination with the West on an independent ticket. These are all improbabilities; neither the South nor the West possesses sufficient courage and leadership at the present writing to support seriously a liberal national policy. The Coolidge spell holds both sections.

Ten Cent Cotton, Eight Months in School and the Coming Crisis

In a recent edition of the daily journal edited by Josephus Daniels there appeared (a) an editorial deploring the evils which are sure to follow if the price of cotton goes to ten cents per pound (this it seems destined to do in the face of a sixteen million bale crop); (b) an article by an agricultural technician advising the farmers how to grow two blades of grass where only one grew before; (c) an interview with the Governor of the state making claims for eight months of school for more than 350,000 children who now enjoy the privilege of six, six and one-half or seven months school attendance each year. These are, obviously, paradoxical if not contradictory expectations. Cotton, according to the price economists, is already being produced in quantities larger than normal market demands. And an adequate rural school system cannot be built on cotton which sells for ten cents per pound. Coöperative associations are doing something toward orderly marketing of both cotton and tobacco but these organizations are none too sure of continued existence; they have from the start fought an uneven battle with the merchants, bankers and speculators of the towns and in one or two significant cases they show signs of defeat.

In short, agricultural decay has already set in. The rural standard of living cannot compete with the urban so long as the profit (or income) from agriculture flows cityward. Unorganized agricultural producers must give way step by step as the industrializing process goes forward. In this unequal struggle the city is sure to win—temporarily at any rate. And when the sequence is completed in the Southern states, we shall as a nation step into the second—or is it to be the last?—phase of the industrial revolution. Our first really acute non-political crisis will then be upon us. We shall see whether or not the industrialists with all their adolescent commercial optimism will be able to save us.

More Promising Signs

The South with its extensive resources and its marvelous climate has at last been discovered by Northerners. Florida may have been only the speculators' lure but it brought thousands of people through the Southern states who might never have come save under the impetus of an unreasonable prize. Typhoid, malaria, yellow fever and the hookworm are no longer to be feared. A boom of some proportions would have come to the South even if Florida still belonged to Spain. The raw materials for a healthy and prosperous civilization are here.

And there is something about the people—something deep and frightening at times, something which has grown out of suffering, something indigenous which might, if it were creatively released, provide the most potent stimulus for cultural advance since New England civilization disintegrated. A few of the socially minded leaders of the South are aware of the portentous changes going on about them, they see that material progress is fast outrunning social resources, and they would, if they could, maintain the balance. Their task calls for rare qualities of vision, independence and courage. If they could win—exciting thought—

E. C. Lindeman.

Washington Notes

I DOUBT very much whether there has ever been an administration that has been quite so successful in preserving intact its false front as this one. I am not talking about corruption. It is distinctly not a corrupt administration. There is of course some small graft here and there, some petty stealing in this or that department, a sprinkling of crooks on the payroll. These things are inevitable and unfailing in every administration. It is a matter of percentage, but in the main the Coolidge administration is as clean as any and measured by the yardstick of the Harding days it is of course spotlessly and chemically pure. But its relative purity isn't the point. The point is that the government is conducted today by the weakest set of officials who have had the reins in fifty years. With Mr. Coolidge in the White House, Mr. Kellogg in the State Department and the massive and venerable Mr. Sargent at the head of the Department of Justice, I submit that no one now living can recall an administration as mediocre, as commonplace, as incompetent, as incongruous. Yet in the country as a whole the impression still prevails that there is wisdom and strength in the White House, that Mr. Coolidge has a grasp on the government, that there is force and feeling and purpose back of his solemnity.

Except for a few earnest but obsessed souls like the good Senator Fess of Ohio and the lady Congressman from Massachusetts—Mrs. Rogers, I think it is—I know no one

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in Washington with opportunities for personal contact who has not privately and accurately taken the mental measure of the President and his little New England group, who does not consider him one of the most extraordinary accidents of American politics and does not marvel that in spite of the newspapers the public as a whole still remains deluded as to his calibre and capacity. There are no delusions left in Washington about Mr. Coolidge among those who come into personal touch with him.

When you consider his extraordinary popularity which has not yet perceptibly begun to wane among those who neither have the chance to size him up personally nor the ability to do so if they had the chance, that is a sweeping statement, but it is so. Unless you have the intellectual equipment and emotional range of a Stearns, the closer and more frequent the contact with Mr. Coolidge, the less possibility there is for admiration or attachment. That is the feeling about Mr. Coolidge among his party representatives in the Senate and everybody here knows it. They neither like nor admire him and if there is the slightest chance to sidetrack him in 1928 they will certainly do it.

If he once begins to slip in his newspaper support the Senatorial opinion above expressed will no longer be privately and secretly held. They will shout it from the housetops. But—and this is the real point—they cannot and they will not, no matter how much they yearn to do it, pull the false front off this administration and show the public the real picture of Mr. Coolidge as they know him, a totally different picture from that implanted by nearly three years of propaganda, so long as he holds unbroken the amazingly solid press support, daily and weekly, which he has had from the start and still has.

I do not think there is any real danger of his losing this support until things begin to go badly in this country, until the unemployment problem presents itself in proportions that cannot be ignored and the swollen tide of prosperity begins to dry up.

So irritating to some of our leading and most prominent Senatorial Republicans is the smugness and solemnity with which the dull commonplaceness of the White House is concealed that they have almost reached the point of praying for a break in the present prosperity. They need not bother—the break will come soon enough, prayers or no prayers. Every student of economics knows the periods of prosperity are as evanescent as the periods of depression. It is not a question of will it break—it's merely a question of when. There are today certain more or less ominous signs which the more foresighted among business men heed as highly significant. It may not come before the summer of 1928, but it is likely to and if it does the idea of renominating Mr. Coolidge will not be seriously entertained anywhere. Continued and unabated prosperity is the prop upon which that bird is perched. When that fails he falls to the ground.

Speaking of Presidential aspirants I hear that—don't laugh, please—Senator Lenroot of Wisconsin believes that should Mr. Coolidge not run again the Republican party could do a lot worse than nominate him as its Presidential candidate. The conservative Senator from the great radical state of Wisconsin would, he is said to think, make a strong candidate and moreover it would be excellent politics to pick him. By such a move—and only by such a move—he is said to believe the great state of Wisconsin, so long off the reservation, could be reclaimed to the Republican party. Partly that is so, but there are those who think Mr. Lenroot's alleged idea about it is entirely unimportant. There is, for instance, a belief that he will have to have an awful lot of luck to escape permanent retirement to private life in the Republican primaries in his state this summer. At that time he comes up for renomination and the present intent and purpose of his colleague, Senator La Follette, and his friends is to prevent that renomination. If they have their way they will send a very different man from Mr. Lenroot here to take his Senate seat—and the general opinion is that they will have their way. By most men here Senator Lenroot is regarded as a politically doomed man and his fantasies if he has them are not disturbing to anyone. It is an entirely harmless way to spend the time and when it is considered how close Senator Lenroot really came to being President in place of Mr. Coolidge it is not surprising his dreams are of the White House. Those who know the inside of the 1920 Republican convention know that it was in the minds of Lodge, Smoot and other leaders there in control to name Lenroot as Vice-President. It had almost been agreed to when, due to the explosion of the delegate from Oregon whom the President has since unsuccessfully tried to reward with a federal judgeship, the convention got out of hand and the great Cal was nominated. Under the circumstances who can blame Senator Lenroot for dreaming?

T. R. B.

Washington.

Bride of the Lamb

Bride of the Lamb, by William Hurlbut. Greenwich Village Theatre. March 30, 1926.

THERE have been of late years so many theories and escapes when it comes to the theatre and theatrical production that we cannot always feel sure on our feet; we cannot pass judgments till we know whether realism is intended or some other method. It may be realism that we see, or it may be expressionism, or some stylization remote, arranged, presented, reduced to its last essential pattern of motives and ideas. Watching the first act of Bride of the Lamb at the Greenwich Village Theatre, the acting by the company and the direction by Mr. Robert Milton, and listening to the lines, we are uncertain about the trend of the method exhibited. There is a certain singleness and detachment of the lines with regard to each other, and a certain singling out and spotting of thoughts and speeches, that suggest a stylized treatment, something not to be taken as realistic. In the acting and in the cues there appears to be an intention of accentuation and perhaps expressionistic underscoring and strongly marked design. Certainly the ensembles and the current of the dialogue as Mr. Milton has produced the scenes, are spotty

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and broken, the lack of rapport is much felt and almost confusing.

But as Bride of the Lamb proceeds we see very clearly that it is realism or nothing. It intends to follow with external precision the details of the life and situation shown us. The speech, the reactions and the characters are meant to follow life as it can be seen and heard. Not any stylization of the material is meant, but a poignant, brutal, biting naturalism, a naturalism of frank emotions, merciless stress and strain, tense and harrowing crises.

Taking the whole production on a realistic basis, then, we may say that Mr. Hurlbut's play has at times a certain amount of power, a power that derives largely from a freedom in the use of emotional details and in the use of strong mixtures of religious phrases, crude psychology and rank emotional contrasts and abandon. A good deal of the play is far from convincing, the matter of it appears to be worked for the theatrical changes that can be wrung from it. It does not persuade you that life is in the balance there among those persons and up and down that room in Doctor Bowman's house in a town of the Middle West. Nor has the play's speech any great vitality, or much of that living rhythm that engages our ears in the theatre. But you have the sense of some degree of talent, a raw and courageous talent unimpeded by shyness before the mysteries of the human soul or by taste. You recognize that there are effective combinations of motives, of disgust, hymns, infatuation, thwarted living, sex and religious ecstasy. You feel that the dramatist has not a profound insight into his situation nor any pattern of idea into which he can mold his rendering of it, but he has, nevertheless, a certain raw intuition as to what the situation amounts to; he has the pitiless commonsense of naturalism and the willingness of the naturalistic devotee to show us what he sees.

As realistic drama the play is not helped by Mr. Milton's direction. The placements on the stage are good, the people are well related to each other so far as their positions go; their exits and entrances are expert; the entire visual emphasis finely planned. But the actors do not play intimately, they are often much too slow, they give us character studies that have little detail, little convincing nuance, and are of no either picturesque or photographically precise interest. Miss Mabel Montgomery and Miss Lorna Elliott do nothing with their parts as neighbors and gossips and worshipers of the revivalist, and Mr. Crane Wilbur as the Reverend Albaugh himself is only fair, the subtleties possible in such a character are not attempted and the inner tension, banality and sublimated pornography are scarcely suggested. It is left to Miss Alice Brady to do most of the work in carrying the plot along, and the plot in Bride of the Lamb moves only with the characters and consists indeed almost wholly of them.

It is Sunday morning, people are coming from church. We see the Bowmans in their sitting-room. He is disgruntled, has pains in his stomach; she dreads the return of a drunken spell. There is a good dinner waiting, chicken, dumplings, everything to keep him persuaded from the temptation to drink; little Verna will soon be home from Sunday School and then dinner. Mrs. Bowman goes out for a moment. Doctor Bowman slips away to his own room and presently comes in drunk. The child returns. The mother has tried to hide from the child and from the town the shame of her husband's vice. At the end of the scene the local preacher brings in Reverend Albaugh the revivalist, to ask the use of Doctor Bowman's vacant lot for the tent where the meetings are held. The visit ends by Reverend Albaugh's staying as the guest of the Bowmans. Doctor Bowman and the preacher have gone to the station for Albaugh's bag, Mrs. Bowman shows him to his room. His shoes need cleaning. She begs to be allowed to do it. He hands her the shoes through the door, and the curtain descends with her clutching them tenderly to her heart. It is all rather sudden, but with the nervous state and taut unhappiness of the woman it might be possible. At any rate we understand the dramatist's design.

For the rest of the play we see this woman farther and farther drawn toward the evangelist. He has filled her poor life, she will slave for him, she confuses him with Christ, she cannot live without him. For a week the town has been swept by the revival; one woman has been taken to the madhouse, the Bowman's child has been filled with the sense of sin, has been saved and has professed before the congregation, time and time again she has confessed, until her father—the one sceptical member of the flock—fears that her Saint Vitus's dance will return. Mrs. Bowman has stolen money from her husband's pockets and even taken the nine dollars from the child's savings bank to raise the ninety dollars that will buy a watch for the Reverend Albaugh. She hides the watch in a drawer. Two sisters come in from the congregation to ask a contribution to a fund for a present to the evangelist. There is a watch for sixty dollars that they intend to present that last night of the meeting as a token of their gratitude. Mrs. Bowman refuses to contribute. At the end of the scene she throws herself at the evangelist's feet, when he returns from the meeting, and begs to go with him. He leaves the house, but cannot conquer his weakness and comes back to her. In the last act she poisons her husband to be free to follow her lover; his wife, whom he has not seen for eighteen years, comes looking for Reverend Albaugh—a device rather weak dramatically; Mrs. Bowman goes mad. The play ends with her in a shred of a wedding-veil and garland of white flowers, talking a trifle in the manner of Ophelia and being led away by the coroner, while Reverend Albaugh, cowering in a corner, asks God's forgiveness.

The performance of Miss Alice Brady, about which so many people are talking, is remarkable. There are traces of Miss Pauline Lord's method, the jumping of the voice suddenly up the scale and into a wholly different tone, the staccato pauses, the shifting on the feet and tricks in physical movement, especially when the actress is standing in one spot and not walking about the scene. But the result is successful, the mannerisms divorced from Miss Lord are still effective. Miss Brady's control and her accumulation of the effects that lead to the long-sustained climax are extraordinary. You have the sense of a strong talent, not with any beauty or poetry, but full of force and of a certain harsh dramatic clarity.

STARK YOUNG.

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Topics for Topers

AS the dinner progressed, I got the impression that Colonel Williams was becoming intoxicated. He spoke to me at great length on the civilizing effect of the radio in the American home.—*Testimony of General Smedley D. Butler at Marine Base, San Diego, California.*

MR. JONES: Great weather we're having. Personally, I'm all for the spring.

MR. SMITH: It's a remarkable time of year, if you like it. Green grass growing up everywhere, flowers coming out, birds singing, and so forth.—Thanks.

MR. JONES: The spring. It makes you think, doesn't it? Along about now, I begin to get restless.

MR. SMITH: When I begin to get that way, as you put it, restless, I get out into the old garden and dig. Nothing like it to make you feel wholesome afterwards.

MR. JONES: Take it where we live, out our way, there's hardly room for a garden. The houses there mostly run to lawn.—Whoa! That's enough.

MR. SMITH: I'd rather live out there where there's no housing problem than anywhere else this side of Florida. Now there's a real state for you.

MR. JONES: Did you say real estate? I've never had the pleasure to go down there. They say it's unusual. But a lot of parties that bought land there is going to get burnt.

MR. SMITH: My brother-in-law went down there but at the last minute he didn't go.—Here's looking at you.

MR. JONES: The Florida question is much discussed. I heard some Pennsylvania business men discussing it, and it was interesting. They said that some people had cleaned up on a big scale, but that others would get cleaned out themselves. It's a problem.

MR. SMITH: I'm told there's one development down there has lost one hundred million dollars. One hundred million dollars is more money than I've got.

MR. JONES: It was a hotel concern. They're hard to handle, unless you're an expert above the average. A lot of these big hotels are pretty big hotels.

MR. SMITH: Thanks, I've still got some.

MR. JONES: On the other hand, some of them are mighty nice to stay in. I had room 636 at the Statler once, and it was a dandy.

MR. SMITH: I had room 626 there myself, but it couldn't have been the same room as yours.

MR. JONES: No, not with that number.—Give me your glass.

MR. SMITH: Thanks. Well, this conversation raises a lot of questions in my mind. I recall that in one hotel, in Buffalo it was, I gave out some laundry overnight to be washed in the usual way they have. Well, sir, along about nine the next morning there was a knock on the door, and I said come in, and he came in with it. What do you think, it wasn't my laundry at all.

MR. JONES: Must have been some other fellow's.

MR. SMITH: That's just what it was, just exactly. Sometimes those big organizations depart from service.

MR. JONES: What do you say to just one more?

MR. SMITH: I don't care if I do.

MR. JONES: Service. Service. Yes, sir, that's what makes the world go round. If it wasn't for service there wouldn't be any U. S. A. worth mentioning. What Europe and the Near East and China and Japan and all need is service.

MR. SMITH: That debt question puzzles me. It all comes down to this point: Will they pay or won't they? I mean, can they afford to? Foreign nations are funny things. It's hard to get hold of their point of view.

MR. JONES: I wouldn't be surprised if that was the case.

MR. SMITH: I've known lots of foreigners, and there isn't one of them I wouldn't have known was a foreigner right along. Something different. One of them said to me the other day, "Coolidge could never have been elected in our country." Now that's a peculiar point of view, isn't it?

MR. JONES: Your mention of Coolidge makes me think of something else. It seems there was a man from Vermont in our office the other day who didn't know that St. Louis was the fourth largest city in the Union.

MR. SMITH: I believe he was mistaken. Philadelphia ranks fourth, and Cleveland fifth, or the other way round.

MR. JONES: Is that so? but I doubt it. Detroit is third, so St. Louis must be fourth, because Baltimore is fifth. They go in that order.—Let's ring for some more ice.

MR. SMITH: Funny thing, how cities grow.

MR. JONES: They repay considerable study. Were you ever in Atlanta? They've got a question there, what with the Negro and all, that's worth discussing.

MR. SMITH: I heard a lecturer say the Negro is the originator of the all-American folk song; the jazz, the blues, they all come from him.

MR. JONES: They call this the jazz age in some sections I've visited.—Fill her right up to the top.

MR. SMITH: And the magazines, and the movies, and all those other things, and the inventions, and the expansion and the general improvements. There's no doubt it's an interesting age we live in. If I had my life to live over, I couldn't do otherwise. How was it with you?

MR. JONES: How what?

MR. SMITH: How was it with you when you were a boy?

MR. JONES: Much the same, much the same. A little more religion maybe. A little less of the other thing.—This last one tastes funny somehow.

MR. SMITH: It has its effect on the stock market. There's an institution for you. They don't make institutions like that every day. Now I nearly bought some last week, and it went up and up and up and now look at it.

MR. JONES: It's an unhealthy sign. Those bears. I'm glad I've kept clear of it. Those bulls.

MR. SMITH: Now in the case of these automobile stocks, why, they're the backbone of the country. Do you realize that in 1924 alone more cars were produced, per man, woman and child, than were produced in 1923? Think that over. Just deduct the cars that weren't sold, and even then the figures are tremendous. Where would we be if all this was to break down? Who would feed your wife, and my wife? If they want a better arrangement, why don't they do something about it?

MR. JONES: I don't think so.

MR. SMITH: Now we have a car in my family, you'd better know that right away. We've had it now two or three years. It's like a brother to me. We all go riding in

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it, and come back home again. Do you know what I mean by an influence? Well sir, that car is an influence. It keeps my home together. My boy fools with it, and my little girl fools with it, and it keeps us all together. We go places and see things my father never thought of seeing. My little girl sees things. Last week I let her have the wheel out on the main road. We nearly crashed into him but quick as a flash the kid cut the wheel and nothing happened after all. Now that's what I mean by an influence. Responsibility plus influence equals home-life. The same thing applies in every one of the forty-eight states.—How about just one more won't hurt us?

MR. JONES: I guess I've had enough.

ROBERT LITTELL.

Reflections on Returning to New York from Louisiana

WE are glad to pass to the gray air, the cold faces, the buildings without color—even from green-shuttered old houses wreathed with wrought-iron balconies—acorn-scrolleries and daisy-garlands and cupids netted in webs—where the delicacy of green creepers interweaves and elegantly feathers the delicacy of iron lace and where, on mornings of March after rain, the faint perfume of greenery is caught, like the scent of the maiden-hair fern; from damp days that draw from old walls that rich toasted smoky smell, the emanation of masonry; from sunny days that release in the streets the varied brightness of girls in light dresses—absinthe greens and shrimp pinks and sky blues—like the birds of an aviary; from French alleys of slender-limbed water-oaks lit with yellow-green translucent leaves; from slender stems of yellow-green glasses where ice-crystal and greenish pearl hold iridescent exhilaration; from the music of the Charleston in the streets, heard and lost in the warm March air, running lightly in the head of the city; from fresh fragrance of raw sugar on the docks, like honey purged of its amber-yellow smell and refined to the shadow of something white; from wooden lace of old riverboats, from slim pilasters and Doric columns, from incredibly ornate old bank buildings with barley-sugar twisted pillars surviving from the seventies; from good beer on draught in old-fashioned bars with gravy-dropping pot-roast sandwiches; from restaurants where crayfish soup is served as intensely hot as it is brown and as the devilled half crayfish in it flashes vivid scarlet, so rankly aromatic that it tastes like the smell of stables; from restaurants where delicate halves of broiler or morsels of pompano, cooked with mushrooms in envelopes of paper and crisply embrowned from the oven, are sliced elegantly open by waiters with black-handled knives of thin steel; from the palaces, the palms, the convents; from the city floating in the water, with the shipping at the end of street-vistas; from the life that floats with the city, without roof and without walls; from those tones of exquisite sweetness—the high shivering cries of riverboats and the last vibration of some steamboat-chord still beating in the air; the fine urban diphthong of er verging always like our own on oi, but sounding its note in a more graceful language; the tangle of Negro children's voices, incessant as the song of birds, playing all about the house, toward noon on a sunny day; the light tingle of a double tine when Saint Louis tells the quarter hours; from those softly, loosely falling cadences—the fronds of drooping, falling things: green frothing of garden urns, the gray dripping moss of live-oaks; the slack wreathing of lantana trailers lightly flowering in heliotrope about tombs where the thin splitting panels reveal random débris of bones—from that cadence—easy, lovely, loosely falling—like the name Louisiana—we pass gladly even from all these, from the city where life dresses most elegantly, from the city where it is most enjoyed, to the city where it is felt most intensely.

We no longer hear the pulse of the time where that port no longer pumps blood for a powerful race; we are drawn back to the rapider pulse of a more energetic organism. Once arrived in this northern port, for all its harshness and its panic, we feel the thrill and the satisfaction of knowing ourselves on the critical battleground, of reassuming our rôle in the popular play: we find relief in the very confusion.

But we reflect that, if, in certain directions, we seem to explore extreme possibilities, to stand at the furthest post of history and look out on the newest horizon, the superior power which has brought us to that point is a superiority of property. We remember the great plantation houses with their wide eighteenth century gardens, their columns and white galleries; the immense furniture, the wardrobes and beds that seem designed for a race of giants; the tall silver candle-sticks like tulips that flower in crystal bells and the flower-chased crystal "cylindres," made to stand on high mantel-shelves; the lustre-clusters that suspend from high ceilings their profusion of huge glass gouts; allegory-encrusted clocks displayed under bubbles of glass; enormous celestial globes mounted in mahogany; courtly legends of the carnival and the opera; the code of honor which provoked the very pirates to become ambitious of behaving like gentlemen; the manners at once easy and grand, at once arrogant and genial; and we recognize in these things the equivalents of the steel of our girders, the vaults of our railway stations, the marmoreal contours of our bathrooms and the accuracy and speed of our business. We remember that that society was founded on a falsehood which it could never carry off and that revolution ploughed it under; and we are led to scrutinize our own for falsehoods. Did the infamous Mme. Lalauré, who kept her slaves chained in cells and tortured them, without ever being brought to justice, really commit a worse crime against humanity than the barbarous commercial enterprise which has produced the office-buildings and the subways? Do we show ourselves less cruel in our dull way than they did in their dramatic one? And who will buy our old phonographs in antique stores, when our property and power are gone? Who will raise funds to preserve our old apartment houses? Who will envy our shortness and quickness, when they observe them surviving in the manners of some man of the decaying race, which has fallen from its classic efficiency, as we are delighted by the manners of the South, even when the man who has inherited them is a weakling?

In the meantime, though we so much lack charm, though we live so much less agreeably than those others, we have

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the satisfaction of believing that we are the bearers of the latest news; of realizing that, between the office and the night-club, in the excitement of getting and spending money, slightly poisoned by the absorption of bad alcohol, we have succeeded in experiencing some sensations which humanity had not yet known. Under pressure, in constant collision, we may be vain of striking off a few flashes of a novel repercussion and color; and at least of escaping provincial ignorance in having learned the worst.

EDMUND WILSON.

A COMMUNICATION

No Danger in Instalment Buying

SIR: It is with regret that I find myself dissenting very strongly from certain economic doctrines expressed or implied in your editorial of April 7, Where Instalment Buying Breaks.

You maintain that instalment buying only anticipates cash buying and therefore in the long run does nothing to increase the capacity of a community to absorb the products of industry. For theoretical proof you present an arithmetical example, which you describe as over-simplified, but evidently consider sufficiently representative to be relevant. If you will reëxamine it I think you will recognize that you simplified away precisely the relevant factor, and that consequently all your conclusions as to the inevitable commercial crisis fall to the ground.

"Let us imagine," you say, "a community of 100 persons, each of whom has an income which does not vary from year to year." If you had assumed that this community contained not only instalment buyers, but producers of goods to be sold on instalments as well—as you would have had to do if your analysis were to throw any light on the problem—the assumption that the income of each does not vary from year to year would become absurd. In this self-contained community the appearance of new goods to be sold on instalments constitutes for the seller new income. If you were a rigid quantity theorist in your views of money, you would hold that this new income of the instalment producer was offset by a decline in the incomes of the other ninety-nine members of the community. Even in that case your conclusions would be very different from those reached in your article.

Fortunately the actual economic world involves fewer theoretical perplexities than the simplified examples devised by economic writers. We produce, let us say, a billion dollars' worth of automobiles that could not be sold, and therefore would not have been produced at the present time, if the sellers insisted on cash down. The buyers, of course, are anticipating their future income; but is this income stationary, or if it varies, is its variation independent of this extension of instalment buying? The makers and sellers of automobiles have received a billion dollars in bankable paper, perfectly good purchasing power, nor in view of the present elasticity of our credit currency, is there the least reason for assuming that this billion represents a credit strain that will pull down the level of prices for other things. This billion is new purchasing power to be divided between wages and profits. Part of it will go to pay instalments on houses, pianos, furniture, part to improve the market for cash goods, whose producers are many of them paying instalments.

The principle involved is that instalment buying, if sufficiently general, clears itself. There is an equivalent item of income for every item of obligation, in society at large. When the sum of credit transactions is cleared the net economic effect remaining is an important addition to the goods at the command of society, created by resources that would not have been so fully utilized if instalment buying had not existed.

Of course the principle is only a special instance of the general one, that production and purchasing power always develop together. Our national production, in terms of value, is our undistributed income, or aggregate purchasing power. Elsewhere in the same article you say, "Eventually business must face the necessity of increasing general purchasing power as fast as it increases production." Business, fortunately, does not need to take any thought on this matter, because in the nature of the case, there can be no increase in value production that is not an equal increase in general purchasing power.

What you really mean is that business must increase that part of purchasing power which is represented by wages, as fast as it increases production if we are to escape over-production crises. The doctrine is an old one: in the time of Rodbertus and Karl Marx, who explained crises in its terms, it was more plausible than today. Then industry was much more narrowly specialized to cheap products of working class consumption. Today the immense development of quality production has robbed the distinction between wages purchasing power and profits purchasing power of any real validity. The purchases of high-priced goods—even the purchases of productive equipment—bear the same general relation to the price level as the purchases of cheap consumption goods. In the disorderly progress of a competitive system any particular class of goods may be overproduced relatively to the available purchasing power, like high class building in New York at present, and may set in motion the forces working toward a crisis. Goods for working class consumption have no priority here, and increasing working class income would offer no general cure for over-production crises.

Of course the case for increasing wages as production increases does not turn on any theory of crises, sound or defective. It rests on moral grounds primarily; secondarily, on more general economic grounds. Underpaid labor is inefficient economically and socially. The safest principle is that labor should be paid as much as the economic system can afford. And this means raising wages not only proportionately with production, but in times of rapid technical progress, in greater proportion.

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It is perhaps of minor practical importance whether a faulty theory of the relation of wages to business prosperity gains currency, so long as the error falls on the right side. A misapprehension of the principle of instalment buying is a more serious matter. Just now most ultra-conservative thinkers are in something of a panic over consumers' credit. They recognize, as the conservatives of two hundred years ago did not, that producers' credit is not only safe, when properly handled, but an immensely powerful agency for increasing the wealth of a nation. But consumers' credit they consider dangerous, and in a sense morally wrong.

There are, no doubt, risks connected with consumers' credit, whether it takes the form of instalment buying, ordinary credit purchases or bank loans. There is urgent need for the systematic study of these risks and the elimination of forms in which the risks are too heavy. But to condemn the principle altogether is, I think, both futile and reactionary. It is futile because producers have discovered that they can do a very large business on the instalment plan with a small percentage of losses, and they will not be kept out of this business by considerations of theory. It is reactionary because it seeks to perpetuate the credit monopoly of the producer while holding the consumer down to the hard rule "For cash only."

ALVIN JOHNSON.

CORRESPONDENCE

Confessions of an Ex-Feminist

SIR: The anonymous article, Confessions of an Ex-Feminist, in your issue of April 14, incited me to organize my personal reaction to the problem in the following notes, which may interest you.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate the writer for her achievement in her home thus far. She is at least partially successful where so many women fail.

The aim of Mrs. W. for a rich life (preached before her marriage and desired now) is, I believe, excellent. But what is a complete life? Does earning money downtown constitute it? Or rubbing elbows with our fellow-slaves? Or standing in crowded trains? Do these elements of our "outside world" strike Mrs. W. as desirable and necessary concomitants of a normal adult's life?

Mrs. W. desires in addition to her home-making life "engrossing, satisfying work." A worthy ambition. But is there anything outside her present work which will be free from "petty, tiresome details?" I think at the core of her discontent lies envy of her husband's (and other men's) seeming economic and social freedom. Is he free? Is he completely satisfied? Does his struggle in the outside world give him a richer consciousness of the universe, a more intense feeling of self-reliance and individuality, an ennobling sense of the sterling qualities of mankind? Or does its sordidness—its cant, its vanity and selfishness—crush his spirit? Does not that contact roughen the edges of our blunt side instead of sharpening the razor of our intellect or encouraging the growth of our innate abilities? Does Mr. W., in short, lead a completely satisfying existence?

My suggestion to Mrs. W. is that she examine critically her aim, and after honestly discarding the chaff of her adolescent illusions construct a new ideal and live up to it. I should think a solution might be reached by her, like that reached by two of my married friends (each of whom has two children). My friend, Dora M., has not left her home since she became a mother. But she radiates sufficient vitality and genuine interest in what is of importance in the world to transform her very unassuming home into an attractive meeting-place for the best minds of her community in Cincinnati. In her eagerness to live, she attracts all phases of the world to her, and is herself therefore the very nucleus of her group. My other friend, Julia P., lives in the wilds of Englewood. Her housework is harder than most other women's today. She is living the life which is her ideal, unhampered by ultra-civilization. She does all her work herself, without the aid of maids or other social nuisances. She has taken in hand the education of her boy and girl (who are now seven and nine respectively) and they are growing up harmoniously and happily under her skilful guidance. She reads widely and intelligently and is alert to new æsthetic opportunities in the city. Her very keen interest in the labor world alone would give her sufficient work to keep her occupied. But she goes to the theatre, concerts, art exhibitions in New York; she even takes an evening off now and then to attend public meetings. Her naturally high-strung nature has become through her marriage calmer, nobler, more dignified than ever.

The creative urge can be effectually employed in channels of life by the woman home-maker which are closed to those unfortunates who cast their best energies into the hungry, complex whirlpool which is our metropolitan working life. What counts is not unreasoning imitation of man's manner of conducting his life, but rather a development of perfect womanhood. If cooking, cleaning and child-rearing do not offer her sufficiently creative opportunities, why does not Mrs. W. devote the very little leisure at her disposal in trying to excel in some hitherto neglected field adapted to her personality?

DORIS FOX BENARDETE.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Dreiser's Style

SIR: In his review of Dreiser's American Tragedy, Mr. T. K. Whipple raises an interesting problem in the art of the novel, in his discussion of Mr. Dreiser's style. "Dreiser could not write as he does," says Mr. Whipple, "mixing slang with poetic archaisms, reveling in the cheap, trite and florid, if there were not in himself something correspondingly muddled, banal and tawdry . . . a failure in writing is necessarily a failure in communication." This is all very true when the thing to be communicated is an abstract idea or philosophy. The novel, however, is effective because of images and emotions and not because of its abstract ideas. Mr. Whipple's error lies in applying intellectual criteria such as logic and profundity to art, which affects us by its vividness or beauty.

From this point of view it becomes evident that Mr. Dreiser's effects are not achieved in spite of but because of his style. The "cheap, trite and tawdry" enable him to present a world which a more elegant and precise style could only hint at. He uses language, consciously or not, in the manner which modern writers, notably Joyce, use deliberately; that is, he identifies his language with the consciousness of his characters. Mr. Whipple evidently expects all writing to conform to the "mot juste" technique of the Flaubert school. But fortunately style cannot be prescribed by rule.

HENRY MILLER.

New York, N. Y.

The Gentle Single-Taxer

SIR: I wish to commend you on your editorial concerning the B. of L. E. Realty Corporation's plan to create a new city to be called Venice. Part of your remark reads: "By retaining title to all the land, and granting long term leases, the brotherhood might have made as much, or more money, and produced in America a really intelligently planned community, like the highly successful Letchworth and Welwyn in England."

This policy would go a great way to solve our economic problems, if applied to *all* land, the annual rent of the land, exclusive of improvement, to be taken by the community, who produced it.

AUGUST WILLICES.

Sioux City, Ia.

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Science and the Self

Free Thought in the Social Sciences, by J. A. Hobson. New York: The Macmillan Company. 288 pages. $4.

THE psychological approach to the social sciences promises to revolutionize, i. e., destroy the foundations of formerly accepted methods. It must, even now, be the cause of great mental anguish among those who have become habituated to the "principles" and "laws" of the days of assurance and faith. One must admit to keep on changing one's mind is painful, especially if the assumption has been made that the mind reflected a valid scientific response. But this is precisely what psychology, the intruder, demands. No one, if he has given intelligent attention to the more recent discoveries of psychology, can longer insist that the social sciences are pure, disinterested explanations of objective facts. Are these sciences then reliable guides for conduct? If the feelings, biases and interests of the investigator are integral to the scientist's conclusions, are these conclusions in any real sense scientific?

We must at the outset commend Mr. Hobson for a valiant attempt to confront this perplexing problem. Few scientists possess the courage to face this issue with respect to their special studies, to say nothing of accepting its implications for science as a whole. Mr. Hobson begins by assuming that all scientific researches are conditioned by a personal factor. He thereupon constructs a hierarchy of the sciences based upon relative dependability or integrity: "The higher the abstraction in the sciences, the less 'feeling' will attach to the material, and the less exposure there will be to unconscious bias in observation and reasoning. So Mathematics is the most disinterested because it is the most abstract in material and in method." The social sciences, of course, come at the bottom of this list; they are "more susceptible to utilitarian motives" since their materials are "less susceptible to precise measurement" and "more refractory to observation and experiment." Politics, economics, ethics, sociology and philosophy belong in the "interest-affected areas of knowledge" and the very concepts used by thinkers in these spheres of knowledge come to us "weighted by a fatal disability." And what have social scientists substituted for this want of objective fact? "Upon the whole they have inclined to brazen it out, laying claims to more rigor and exactitude of principles and method than they possess, and putting on a brave array of terminology and formulas to hide their half-conscious sense of their defects." Mr. Hobson believes that psychology is capable of wiping out this hypocrisy.

He does not, as a matter of fact, consider hypocrisy the correct word. These so-called scientists "are not so much the intellectual mercenaries of the vested interests as their volunteers." The conclusions of social scientists tend to keep safely within the boundaries of conservatism, not because investigators and theorists are dishonest but rather because of a certain inherent timidity which possibly results from a selective process among scholars. In any case Mr. Hobson pins his faith on psychology for the future catharsis of social science. But after all psychology is also one of the social sciences unless one is to select extreme behaviorism, i. e., unrationalized results of instrumental measurements, as representative of the only true psychological knowledge. Behaviorism, however, is neither mentioned nor recognized in Mr. Hobson's book. Indeed the only authorities quoted in connection with psychological issues are Aristotle, Plato, McDougall, Hobhouse, Tawney, Wallas and Veblen. Of these McDougall alone among contemporaries lays claim to psychological professionalism and he is used largely as a foil for Mr. Hobson's contentions. (After close analysis of what emerges as Mr. Hobson's psychology, one is compelled to admit, however, that it represents no fundamental divergence from McDougall.)

The psychology with which Mr. Hobson makes his critical approach to the social sciences is conceived in terms of instinctive factors. All analysis is conducted with *instincts* as the central forces, *interests* as secondary urges, and *survival-value* as ultimate tests. With the use of these three categories, he pries into the secrets of economic, political, sociological, biological and ethical theories and proposals. His tools are most effective when applied to his specialism, namely, economic science.

The fault which Mr. Hobson finds with the main body of economic doctrine is not "that it grew out of practical interest in particular economic problems." Such interest is legitimate and helpful. But successive schools, in attempting to build an abstract science with general applicability, tended to emphasize such conclusions as were useful to the ruling powers of the time without sufficient regard for theoretical consistency or factual substantiation. This was not a deliberate choice. Leading economists were influenced in subtle and unconscious ways. Many of them made qualifications and gave hints of more rounded consideration. Moreover there were not lacking critics in every generation who pointed out the weaknesses of the theories prevailing. But in the authoritative tradition which grew out of the complex of social forces, the qualifications and the critics were forgotten; the seeds they planted withered in an unsympathetic social climate.

Thus it was that when industrialism was getting its foothold and business men wanted freedom from interference by governments or labor, classical theory emphasized laissez-faire and the "system of natural liberty," visualized production as the end of the economic system without sufficient regard to the theory of distribution, and developed the iron law of wages. And it was natural that Stanley Jevons and his followers among the neo-classicists did not press their hedonism far enough to "include equally the utilities and disutilities" both of production and consumption, failed to recognize the difficulties of applying the measuring rod of money to varying satisfactions or dissatisfactions of different persons in different times, were occasionally inconsistent in complying with their self-imposed limitations, and disregarded values of such things as public services, health and education which lie outside the realm of market valuation.

Mr. Hobson's critique of marginalism rests upon the idea that it overemphasizes the significance of the marginal element. Production is an organic process; its units are often of considerable size. The quantity of each factor of production in a given business is more or less predetermined by the unity of the business plan, not by a consideration of the value of infinitesimal increments of that factor. Habits and standards of living influence consumption more than do calculations by individuals as to the marginal utility of small separate purchases. The theory falsely regards marginal increments of goods or factors of production, and marginal choices too, as being infinitesimal and commensurable in terms of money. The assumptions of the marginalists are convenient in that they allow the elaboration of theory by mathematical processes, but Mr. Hobson contends that they involve abstractions which are not truly representative of the facts any more than an "economic man" is genuinely a simplification of a real man. They are not abstractions like those of the natural sciences which ignore merely irrelevant

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details and accurately symbolize phenomena; they ignore rather the essential nature of the human behavior in question. Such false abstraction has been accepted, he believes, partly because it furnishes a neat justification for a competitive order, and partly because it supplies economists with an elaborate and satisfying mathematical technique.

Much the same faults are found in the more recent welfare economists. They attempt to measure incommensurable satisfactions in terms of dollars, yards or pounds. "The utilitarian calculus," writes Mr. Hobson, "is inapplicable to differences of kind." Qualitative differences cannot be converted into quantitative. He admits that quantitative measurement supplies a useful means of assessing roughly certain aspects of social welfare, such as standards of health or living, but denies that it can be used to build up economic theory as an exact science. In this respect we believe Mr. Hobson is somewhat limited by his own experience and observation. He seems to make insufficient distinction between the quantitative assumptions that underlie the abstract mathematical school now dominant in England, and the quantitative or statistical investigations of actual phenomena that are reshaping certain aspects of economic theory in this country.

Proletarian economics does not escape the general charge that theory is twisted by bias or interest. In fact Mr. Hobson believes that it is even more open to this charge than the academic variety, since it must be adapted to popular consumption and hence finds a special survival value in oversimplification. And he does not accept the defense that its myths are necessary to inspire the labor movement to action; he believes that they give a sufficiently false representation of objective facts actually to hinder its progress.

The conclusion is not that the scientist should have no interest, but rather that in his science his interest should not distort the truth. To recognize what his interests are, to admit them, is the first step in guarding against them. They will not necessarily be crude and easily exorcised. "When the social scientist is a man of great intellectual keenness and a high standard of sincerity, the rationalization practiced by his instincts of self-assertion, intellectual pride, group-sentiment, will be correspondingly subtle." Though Mr. Hobson does not say so, it would seem cautious to regard with most suspicion a scientist who gives no sign of such self-scrutiny, proclaiming himself wholly candid and impartial.

The process, then, for purifying the social sciences hinges upon the possibility of eliminating the scientist's interests from his premises and conclusions. The self of the scientist must be discounted before validity may be attached to his deductions and inductions. There is, of course, another manner of approach, namely, that of *counting* rather than discounting the self and its interests. When this approach is made, science becomes instrumental and empirical rather than fundamental (so-called) and dogmatic. We thus begin to see that science belongs to *our* universe—that it is itself social and psychological in nature. Once this point of view is accepted by the scientist he ceases to be grim and austere; indeed, he comes to view his interests and even his "laws" with a saving sense of humor. No wonder early economists concocted a dismal science—they were pretending to be pure and disinterested and the merest smile would have cracked their absurd masks. However, Mr. Hobson does not champion the above thesis; we suggest it merely as another way of envisaging his problem.

GEORGE SOULE and EDUARD C. LINDEMAN.

A Soldier Looks at a War

Fix Bayonets! by John W. Thomason, Jr. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 245 pages. $3.50.

JOHN W. THOMASON, Jr., is a Captain in the U. S. Marine Corps, a professional soldier. He fought through the period of American participation in the Great War because it was his job to do so; he is at this moment helping to keep the world safe for plebiscitary commissioners somewhere near the sandy shores of Tacna and Arica, also because it is his job to do so. Meanwhile, and apparently for his own amusement, he has written one of the best books about modern war that anybody ever wrote, illustrated with sketches by himself, made on the battlefield, which reinforce and supplement his text within a hair's breadth of perfection. It is not only a fine piece of stalwart, two-handed writing; it is a book which ought to be made required reading for everyone who is interested in this painful uphill job of abolishing war.

For Thomason represents a point of view toward war which pacifism is too prone to overlook, the point of view which is undoubtedly commonest of all among the men who actually go into battle and oppose their flesh to the singing steel. It might be called the professional fighter's attitude, though it is shared, I think, by most men in uniform, including temporary volunteers and conscripts. These men find war horrible, but not unendurable. They dislike very much indeed to go forward knowing that an 80 percent casualty list in the course of a few days is by no means improbable. But there is something else which they dislike even more. That something else, if I read Thomason correctly, is by no means merely the dread of being shot for cowardice, nor the fear lest your fellows should know that you are afraid: if they have a grain of sense they can see that you are terrified as they are. No, the important thing is the desire to keep faith with something secret and inside yourself, which does not want you to be discreet and careful, which wants you to press on with the project in hand, at whatever cost. The project is one without meaning, useless, futile; the cost is probable death; but there the desire is, stronger than sweat and agony, stronger than anything. It is as senseless as the unbalanced vision of the moth flying into the candle; it does not mitigate in any degree the ultimate folly of war, but it exists and must be recognized, just as we must recognize that as things are now, most women, in spite of everything, had rather see their men march away to death or mutilation than to keep them home safe and sound for fifty years more, but branded as The One Who Didn't Go.

Captain Thomason of course says nothing of all this except by inference. He merely tells what happened to some American Marines in 1918, at Belleau Wood, Soissons, Blanc Mont and Lucy-le-Bocage. The Marines he writes of were members of the Fourth Brigade, 15,000 officers and men. In the course of that summer they received 14,000 replacements—which means that there were ninety-three casualties for every one hundred men.

Typical of the tone of the book are these lines descriptive of a file of men going up to the front:

> There is no singing—veterans know, and they do not sing much—and there is no excitement at all; they are schooled craftsmen, going up to impose their will, with the tools of their trade, on another lot of fellows; and there is nothing to make a fuss about.

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> Battles are not salubrious places, and every file knows that a great many more are going in than will ever come out again—but that is along with the job. And they have no illusions about the job.

He maintains the professional attitude even at moments when, for another, the temptation to underline would have been heavy. For instance:

> The air snapped and crackled all around. The sergeant beside the lieutenant stopped, looked at him with a frozen, foolish smile, and crumpled into a heap of old clothes. Something took the kneecap off the lieutenant's right knee and his leg buckled under him. He noticed, as he fell sideways, that all his men were tumbling over like duckpins; there was one fellow that spun around twice, and went over backward with his arms up. Then the wheat shut him in and he heard cries and moaning. He observed curiously that he was making some of the noise himself. . . . He heard somebody coming on heavy feet, and cunningly shut his eyes to a slit . . . playing dead. . . . A German officer, a stiff, immaculate fellow, stood over him, looking at him. He lay very still, trying not to breathe. The Boche had out his pistol, a short-barrelled Luger, rested it on his left forearm, and fired deliberately. He felt the bullet range upward through the sole of his foot, and something excruciating happened in his ankle. . . .

Do not think too hardly of that German officer; Captain Thomason does not. Shooting the wounded on the field of battle was part of the job; if they were only slightly hurt, they might lie low and pick off your officers as you went forward. Also, killing your prisoners as they surrendered, or on their way back behind the lines, if not exactly part of the job, was something inevitable, to be taken with a shrug. It didn't necessarily mean hatred of the enemy, either; Captain Thomason agrees with most other eye-witnesses that all the best hating was done by the stay-at-homes. But when you have spent months teaching a boy that a Boche behind a tree, or in a machine gun nest or a trench, is something to be obliterated at all cost, how can you expect him suddenly to remember that a Boche with hands up—hands very likely red with the blood of his own buddy—is something to be cherished and taken back, at peril of the taker's life, probably, to the Paradise of safety behind the lines? The answer is, you can't.

What I have said might mislead you into thinking Captain Thomason just a rhinoceros-hided fighting machine, one incapable of understanding the agonies of the spirit endured by a more finely organized John Dos Passos or an equally finely organized, better balanced Hamilton Gibbs. Such a notion would be unjust. He reports, for example, with entire competence and sympathy the feelings of one amateur soldier, "a Ph. D. from Harvard, a big, pale unhandy private, hounded habitually by sergeants, and troubled with indigestion and patriotism."

> For all his training, a pack was not at home on his shoulders or a rifle easy in his hands. He reflected, feeling for the road with clumsy hob-nails—for he was blind in the dark—"Now, those men are undoubtedly of the professional-soldier type. It is all a business with them. They are tired and want to rest, and they say so frankly. No matter how tired I was, I'd never have the courage to say I wanted a relief." . . . Of all the stupid, ignorant, uncivilized things, a war! Who coined that phrase, civilized warfare? There was no such thing! . . .
>
> All at once there was a new shell-hole, and the doctor of philosophy, sometime private of Marines, lay beside it, very neatly beheaded, with the rifle that had been such a bore to keep clean, across his knees, and dried prunes spilling out of the pockets that he had never learned to button. The column went on. At dawn a naval medico attached to the Marine Brigade, with a staff officer, passed that way. . . . The staff officer picked up the rifle, snapped back the bolt and squinted expertly down the bore. "Disgustin'," he said. "Sure he was a replacement. You'd never catch an old-timer with a bore like that—filthy! Bet there hasn't been a rag through it in a week. You know, surgeon, I was looking at some of the rifles of that bunch of machine-gunners lying in the brush just across from Battalion. They were beautiful. Never saw better kept pieces. Fine soldiers in a lot of ways, these Boche!"

There speaks the professional; there, in effect, speaks Captain Thomason who has gone through hell and come out on the other side to make with pencil and pen this accurate, methodical and magnificent report. Not within his perspective is the war behind the war—governments, propaganda, places in the sun, struggles for raw materials, corrupt press and all the rest of it. Even the generals are beyond his horizon, which is that of the men who are ordered to kill and to die, and are successful at both. Irony and pity are not lacking from his story; but never for an instant does he parade in the borrowed garments of the sentimentalist who assumes that what he himself feels, the fighting men *must* feel as well despite the fact that patently they don't. An honest book, by a soldier who is also and accidentally a fine artist in two fields; and a book for which we should feel no less grateful because we may find it difficult to sympathize with the author's point of view.

BRUCE BLIVEN.

Stories of the East

The Village in the Jungle, by Leonard Woolf. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. $2.50.

Black Valley, by Raymond Weaver. New York: The Viking Press. $2.

Landscape with Figures, by Ronald Fraser. New York: Boni and Liveright. $2.50.

> What though the spicy breezes
> Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle?

WHAT indeed! the reader will exclaim after reading Mr. Leonard Woolf's Village in the Jungle. In the Hambantota District of the Southern Province, the breezes are hot winds which often for a whole season fail to bring rain. The prospect so pleasing to the facile missionary imagination is the jungle itself, which has engulfed the cities of the Sinhalese kings, with their palaces, temples and great irrigation works, and like a constricting boa is strangling and swallowing the wretched village, where man is indeed vile, not because he bows down to wood and stone, but because he has learned the vices of commerce and the art of exploitation.

The Village in the Jungle was published in England twelve years ago, the fruit of Mr. Woolf's experience in the Ceylon Civil Service. It amply justifies its revival. So far as a sympathetic and penetrating imagination can take the artist in the understanding and portrayal of the

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nature of an alien people he has gone. The reader will recur to A Passage to India, but in the latter book Mr. Forster has dealt with the Hindu mind in contact with the Occidental, at least through language. In Mr. Woolf's village the native lives his own life, under British law as remote as the sky, and as impotent to help. The underlying situation exists in North Dakota, the tyranny of money and the snare of credit, the mortgage on the crop and desire for the woman. The human motives work out in the same way, greed and lust bringing forth revenge which is wild justice, and punishment which is no justice. But the atmosphere is that of the Northern prairie, stern and reluctant, but clean and placable, an honorable foe which keeps its promise. In Ceylon the village has the pathos of an outpost feebly held against a nature, sinister, obscene and inexorable—a dozen huts, two score human beings weakened by hunger and disease with the fear of the jungle in their eyes. Here greed is betrayal, crime breaks down man's last counter-attack, and the jungle takes all.

Black Valley is written from a more external point of view and compounded of more fictional elements. The Japanese city of Kurodani is the background where the missionaries maintain an outpost of Christianity in the midst of a population which mostly goes its way unheeding. In its isolation, the missionary compound, like a trading concession in China or an army post in India, produces characters who have reverted to type. There is the Reverend Alurid Wilberforce, fanatical prophet of the other world; Mrs. Shea, good-natured and adept mistress of this one; her husband Billy, the perfect subaltern; and the Ladies of the Mission in several degrees of stupidity and malevolence. To them enters Miss Frances Penwick, middle-aged missionary from China, coming to meet her fiancé Captain Horne. The psychology of this episode is somehow reminiscent of Conrad in pursuit of Henry James; as the little group apart, Gilson Wilberforce, his dying mother, and his patroness Gracia West, suggests scenes from Ibsen. Gilson's other life is among the Japanese, and comes to brief flowering in his love for A Yo Ake San, without benefit of clergy. Gilson's problem is described rather scholastically. "Being bilingual, and in such disparate tongues, his nature was compartmented with an intricacy that made it impossible to fuse it from any one point into a unifying perspective." This will serve as a comment on the novel as a whole. Mr. Weaver has not subdued his abundant material to a single design, or convinced us that his themes belong in the same symphony. Nevertheless the clash and confusion among the intruders, the arbitrariness and eccentricity of their characters and the platitude of their adventures, against the background of Kurodani, indifferent and imperturbable, is perhaps the impression which Mr. Weaver wished to convey.

In A Landscape with Figures Mr. Fraser has set a Chinese screen into narrative movement. The book is pure decoration. The landscape is the chief element, the figures are merely accessories. We are not obliged to take them too seriously. Lord Sombrewater and his companions who called themselves the Seven Sages, and his daughter Lychnis, penetrate a world as remote from their own as Mr. Wells's Utopia, to which it bears a certain resemblance. It is as if Mr. Fraser had done Men Like Gods into Chinese, perhaps unconsciously, though the recurrence of the name Lychnis suggests a clue. In any case in Mr. Fraser's Utopia the control of natural forces by science is presented to no utilitarian end, but merely as a device for shifting the stage of nature, varying the landscape across which move the figures, in new and lovely patterns as in a prolonged dance. The stiff attitudes and limited movements of the Europeans are palliated by the gorgeous dresses in which their Chinese hosts array them, but their mental attitudes remain incongruous, with a delicate effect of satire, perceived by one of them, Ambrose Herbert, through whose "passionless receptivity" of mind the story is communicated. It is a dance of the body, against the changing loveliness of sky and trees and water; it is a dance of mind bending and flowing to mysterious rhythms which only the adept among the Chinese follow to the end. Landscape with Figures is, as the author says, an effort to capture the secret of the knowledge and beauty which fascinate us in the faces of Chinese portraits, in the designs of Chinese decoration. Whether or not Mr. Fraser has reached the heart of the mystery he has added to our comprehension of its symbols, and our joy in them.

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT.

Other People's Daughters

Other People's Daughters, by Eleanor Rowland Wembridge. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 333 pages. $2.50.

SO far, the very ancient race of novelists and the very young race of psychologists have kept each to its own side of the fence. But in Mrs. Wembridge's highly original book, the fence between them is down for the first time, and a novelist and a psychologist are combined in the head of one sensitive and able person. The result is at once illuminating and highly readable.

Superficially, there is the same gap between fiction and psychology that there is between any art and any science. The one tries to create individuals, the other tries to take them apart, not so much as individuals, but as samples of a species, to find out what makes them go, to collect a body of facts about them and establish general laws. While each is at bottom attempting the same thing: to discover what human beings are like, and tell about it, there are two great differences between them: one is analytical, the other synthetic, one is concerned with homo sapiens in general, the other with particular men and women. The psychologists, in the short space of a few decades, have dug up the most profound and startling secrets, accumulated revolutionary information, bored deep into the human mystery. But the novelists are still far ahead of them in understanding of one of the deepest mysteries of all.

Let us turn for a moment to another science, and another art. Geology and painting have nothing in common; they exist for quite different purposes. The geologist can tell you everything there is to be known about a particular hill. Everything, that is, but one thing: he cannot help you to recognize it when you come upon it, he cannot show you how it is distinct from every other hill in the world. Only the landscape painter can do that.

What the painter and the geologist can tell you about a hill are unrelated truths, but what the psychologist and the novelist can tell you about a human being are two sides of the same truth. The psychologist is mainly occupied with resemblances, and facts that hold true in enough cases to be useful. The novelist is concerned with differences, and facts that are significant in one case alone. The psychologist is hunting for common denominators, as indeed he must at this stage of his game. The novelist, if he is a good novelist, is on the contrary hunting for individuals. When he succeeds, when he has found his indi-

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vidual in his imagination, when he has brought him to life by making him talk and act, the novelist has done something just as necessary as what the psychologist has done in his static dissections of mass minds, and a good deal more difficult. Surely one of the most important facts of all is that no two people are alike, that there remains an essential, mysterious difference between any two human beings over and above all the divergences that can be given a name on a psychological blueprint of their personalities.

That psychologists should bow before this mystery is asking too much. But would it be unfair to demand that they cease from writing about human beings as if they were Martians, that they come to regard classification as only an instrument, and types a means rather than an end in themselves; that they cut down on the supply of esoteric names for familiar objects, and watch out for the unconscious vanity of pioneers who think nomenclature is discovery enough?

With none of these things can we reproach Mrs. Wembridge.

As psychologist of the Women's Protective Association at Cleveland she was presented with an enviable wealth of experience. Each of the seventeen sketches, or rather short stories, is founded upon an actual case, and a real girl. Each case, and each girl, besides a human story, presented an interesting illustration of some psychological commonplace. Almost anyone else in Mrs. Wembridge's position would have served up the humanity and the psychology in an undistinguished succotash. But she, on the contrary, boils all the psychology (which is never very novel or startling) into a short note in small type on a separate page. One reads: "The instinctive desire to be with the crowd, which is often called the herd instinct, is very strong, especially in young people. Human beings are essentially gregarious, and the baffling of their social instinct," etc. From then on through a touching, truthful and imaginative short story, alive with such real people that the psychological moral is soon forgotten. Not that it is unimportant: it is the unseen basis of the story; the story is doubly founded on truth, being fed by knowledge and imaginative projection of knowledge. When Mrs. Wembridge invents out of whole cloth, her feet leave the earth and she drifts close to a tenuous sentimentality. As a rule, she sticks to the facts, and curiously enough, it is then, rather than when she is inventing, that her sketches read most like first-rate short stories.

There are some very real and memorable girls in the book, brought more vividly to life, by Mrs. Wembridge's creative observation, than the heroines of most novels. It would be hard to say which was the best. Lorna Doone (The Alias) ranks high. Lorna Doone thought she was named after a cookie, not a book. "Since I am so pretty, why shouldn't I have a pretty name?" Cross-examination made Lorna Doone, who was going to be an actress, confess that she was Paula Pinkheart, whose uncle died in Spain. Paula admitted, with tears, that not Lorna, or Paula, was her real name, but Celia Claymore, and that she had forged checks in Chicago. Under further pressure, Celia became Peggy Ryan (who "had kept house for a fella in a little bungalow on Fifth Avenue"), and Peggy became Winifred Lemare ("called Winsome for short"). The poor girl's real name was Aggie Pack.

Better perhaps than anything in the book, and unfortunately not included, was Mrs. Wembridge's travels in Moronia, in the January American Mercury. A parallel sketch is Dull, which records the answers to easy questions given by a trio of girls with low I. Q.'s. The answers show minds barely able to operate, but all three minds prove their incapacity in different and characteristic ways. When we have said that a person's mind is about two-thirds of what it should be, we have barely begun to talk about the person in question. Where the average psychological handbook leaves off, Mrs. Wembridge begins. Her defectives are real people as well as defectives.

What Mrs. Wembridge has done others can try to do after her. It is, so far as I know, absolutely new territory. A good many novelists would come back with a fresher grip on reality for journeying in it, a good many psychologists could not fail to return more human. But a mere imitation of her method will not necessarily result in anything as good as Other People's Daughters. For Mrs. Wembridge is very decidedly an artist, and to that extent defies imitation. R. L.

Reflections from the East

A Chinese Mirror: Being Reflections of the Reality behind Appearance, by Florence Ayscough. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 464 pages. $5.

THERE are many books to tell us that the common people of China are buried deep in superstitions, but very few students have had the sensitiveness and the wit to dig up from erudition the elements of sympathy which these superstitions contain. Mrs. Ayscough, who supplied the literal equivalents for Amy Lowell's poems from the Chinese, Fir-Flower Tablets, has written a book of beauty and her publishers, with the aid of the fascinating black and white drawings of Lucille Douglass, have given it a beautiful embodiment.

Of Mrs. Ayscough's learning there can be no question; indeed she is occasionally over-burdened. She has evidently carried on, during many years' residence in Shanghai, a laborious pursuit of the terminology and meaning of primitive beliefs, undiscouraged by their elusiveness or by the polite contempt of modern Chinese scholars for such study. She is very little worried about what eastern civilization needs to borrow from the west, although her fragmentary expressions of political opinion are highly orthodox. She is most interested in a persuasive description of attitudes of mind which we might do well to absorb in some degree from our Oriental neighbors. In educating us, she follows the best Chinese pedagogics; she relies upon example in trying to arouse our sympathy and admiration.

Three things of importance she describes in detail: how to build a house, how to lay out a garden, and how to worship a mountain. Although it is difficult to imagine the American real estate promoter praying to any god but Mammon, it would be salutary to compel every speculative builder in the United States to read how houses and gardens can be reverently created. In recommending such a course of purification for the builder, however, one has a moment of terrified pause. It might—it certainly would lead to imitation of Chinese forms. What has been done on our California and Florida coasts in the name of "Spanish" shows the risks we run when any new models are offered for domestic architecture. But when it comes to worshiping a mountain, anything would be better than our present manner of setting up bill-boards and scattering campers' tin cans. A little superstition of the kind that is practiced on the steep slopes of T'ai Shan might do us a great deal of good.

LYMAN BRYSON.

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